

**Revised Charter Application  
For Dogwood Charter School**

Submitted to:  
Superintendent of Schools  
Chartiers Valley School District  
For Consideration by the Chartiers Valley Board of School Directors  
DATE: November 15, 2021

**“It’s through relationships that we grow best—and learn best.” - Fred Rogers**

## **I. SCHOOL DESIGN**

### **I.1. Mission Statement:**

#### **I.1.A. The core philosophy and underlying purpose of the school:**

Dogwood Charter School will be a Charlotte Mason school in the south hills of Pittsburgh, PA offering K-12th grade students a unique education fostering the love of learning, wonder, and curiosity in an intentional environment based on the belief that children are, foremost, persons.

The school and classes are small and multi-aged to create a less competitive, more cooperative atmosphere to foster relationships between the students. Teachers and students learn together, removing intimidation. Interesting stories in good books replace lectures, worksheets and textbooks so that children’s natural love for learning is never hindered. Students’ questions and thoughts are valued as they narrate (to tell back) what they connect to and learn. The day is full of variety, and classes are short to keep interest high. All students experience algebra, physics, reading, foreign language, composers, artists, nature walks, dance, theater, Shakespeare, music, piano instruction, sport, composition, philosophy and poetry because no child is grouped as “general ed” or “advanced.” Each is a person invited, in his or her own way, to take risks, collaborate and struggle with inspiring ideas and worthy activities from the rich curriculum, uncovering his or her potential and capabilities while appreciating the personalities and abilities of others. Respecting these human needs for relationships really does result in delightful, wholehearted learning and growing. Children know how to think and how to relate to others, thus enabling them to live confidently and resiliently as global citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Dogwood Charter School is replicating Gillingham Charter School (“GCS”) in Pottsville, PA. GCS has been successful in providing an exemplary Charlotte Mason relational education for its K-12 students over the past decade. Therefore, Dogwood Charter School has contracted with GCS to assist in replicating its model through a combination of application consulting services and professional development for Dogwood’s leadership and staff during its start-up phase. GCS is an accredited, model school with the Charlotte Mason Institute, and has created a culture that nurtures life long learners. Throughout GCS’s decade-long history, they have seen tremendous growth and success. See Appendix J for more data, information and contract with Gillingham Charter School.

Dogwood Charter School cultivates a respectful learning organization upon the belief that children are, foremost, persons. They are not blank canvases or clay to be molded. Because we are persons, it’s not just important what we teach but also *how* we teach. It is the key to student success, reducing anxiety, and kindling their love of learning and desire to contribute to society, including careers and higher education. Dogwood Charter School will teach using a relational educational philosophy, which focuses on

the personhood of children (and adults) and their natural needs and capacities for learning. The term “relational education” comes from a person’s natural need, as social beings, for healthy relationships with others, things, nature, and ideas. It is through meaningful relationships and respectful methods of teaching these relationships that children learn the content, concepts, habits, and knowledge they need to live in the 21st century. The nourishment of relationships, habits, and ideas through a relational education not only prepares students for future education but fosters within them an avid desire for a life of learning, enabling them to author their own lives confidently and resiliently. Growing persons need ideas to think about, engaging things to do, and positive social relationships. Every part of Relational practice zeros in on and meets these needs.

Tenets of relational education:

1. Children are born persons - they are not blank slates or embryonic oysters who have the potential of becoming persons. They already *are* persons.
2. Children from all walks of life and backgrounds may make choices for good or bad.
3. The concepts of authority and obedience are true for all persons. Submission to authority is necessary for any society, group, or family to run smoothly.
4. Adults are not free to limit a child's education or use fear, love, power of suggestion, or their own influence over a child to make a child learn.
5. The only means a teacher may use to educate children are the child's natural environment, the training of good habits, and exposure to living ideas and concepts. This is what the motto "Education is an **atmosphere**, a **discipline**, a **life**" means.
6. "Education is an **atmosphere**" doesn't mean that we should create an artificial environment for children, but that we use the opportunities in the environment they already live in to educate them. Children learn from *real* things in the *real* world.
7. "Education is a **discipline**" means that we train a child to have healthy living and learning habits and self-control.
8. "Education is a **life**" means that education should apply to all parts of the whole child: intellectual, physical, emotional and personal. The mind needs ideas of all kinds, so the child's curriculum should be varied and generous with many subjects included.
9. The child's mind is not a blank slate, or a bucket to be filled. It is a living thing, needs no special training or exercises to make it ready to learn, only needs knowledge to grow. As the stomach is designed to digest food, the mind is designed to digest knowledge, and so we provide a rich, generous curriculum that exposes children to many interesting, living ideas and concepts.
10. "Education is the science of relations;" that is, children have minds capable of making their own connections with knowledge and experiences, so we make sure the child learns about nature, science and art, knows how to make things, reads many living books (those written in conversational or narrative style, as opposed to what is found in textbooks and encyclopedias) that they are physically fit.
11. In devising a curriculum, we provide a vast amount of ideas to ensure that the mind has enough brain food and knowledge about a variety of things to prevent boredom, and subjects are taught with high-quality literary language since that is what a child's attention responds to best.

12. Since one doesn't really "own" knowledge until one processes it and can express it, children are required to narrate, or tell back (verbally, visually, dramatically), what they have read or heard.

13. Children must narrate after one reading or hearing. Children naturally have a good focus of attention, but allowing a second reading weakens their ability to pay attention. When teachers summarize and ask comprehension questions, they give children a second chance, making the need to focus the first time less urgent. By getting it the first time, less time is wasted on repeated readings, and more time is available during school hours for more knowledge.

14. Children have two guides to help them in their moral and intellectual growth - "the way of the will," and "the way of reason."

There is a lot of rhetoric in our culture about "life-long learning." The phrase can mean different things, but it usually occurs when people recognize that children are bored in schools, that their lessons do not excite or engage them and that they succumb to either memorizing or regurgitating for a test, retaining little (Gopnik, Meltzoff & Kuhl, 1999) or walking away mentally, if not physically, from books.

We want to be a school where students don't just have to go to but a place they want to go to. They want to go to school because they are engaged, not bored. Learning is presented in a way that is delightful, challenging and intriguing, so students retain much from books and ideas. Positive, respectful relationships are built in school and in partnerships in the community. Consequently, our students grow to be proud of who they are, from whence they come, and of what they will do for this community and the world. We believe all students can and are willing to learn.

This is the key to Dogwood and what makes it distinct from the local schools and the charter schools in our county and neighboring counties. For example, at the environmental charter school, the mission focuses on teaching nature and ways to care for it. At the performing arts charter school, the mission focuses on teaching students visual arts, drama, dance, and music. At the technology and science charter school, the mission focuses on teaching children the sciences. At the gifted school, the mission only focuses on teaching gifted students. At the charter school for children who need special education, the mission only focuses on teaching children with special needs. Dogwood will teach the sciences. We will teach the arts. We will teach about the environment. We will teach both gifted and children with differing abilities.

### Methodological Distinctions

The following 25 characteristics are essential to a Relational Education. Every characteristic is practiced by the school as a whole, and all staff and faculty will be trained in the methods. These 25 characteristics make the school unique to the Chartiers Valley School District and schools in the surrounding communities:

1. Small School
2. Small Classes
3. "Forms" -Multi-Aged Classes and Looping



4. Whole Books, Narrative Texts
5. Method of Narration (a specialized form of retelling)
6. Method of Student Talk (no teacher interrogation)
7. Method of Masterly Inactivity (minimum teacher interference)
8. Short Class Periods
9. Many School Subjects for All Students (no tracking)
10. Weekly Nature Walks and Journaling
11. School-wide Garden
12. Picture Study/Composer Study
13. Singapore Math Instruction
14. Required Languages K-12<sup>th</sup>
15. Required Sports Competition in Upper School and Intramurals in Middle School
16. Required Arts K-12<sup>th</sup> (theater, dance, music, instrument, art, handwork)
17. Required High School Internship Program
18. Field Studies and Community Visitors
19. Trimester Open-Ended Essay Exams (instead of quizzes, fill-in-the-blank tests)
20. Narrative Report Cards (instead of grades in lower and middle years)
21. Japan's Professional Development Program, "Lesson Study"
22. Restorative Practices Disciplinary Program (non-punitive)
23. Tastefully Decorated, Home-like, Orderly Facilities and Classrooms
24. Parent/Student/Teacher Evening Collaborations
25. School-wide Shared Leadership and Learning Organization Framework

### A Day in the Life of a Student

Our student arrives at school, chatting with younger and older schoolmates as she grabs her bagged breakfast and walks to her desk which she shares with a deskmate. She is pleasantly greeted by her teacher and the beautiful atmosphere of soft colors, wooden desks, armoires, lamps and floor rugs. Prints of great artists are framed and hung on the walls. The Class Library's shelves are filled with the best books for free reading during free time, homework and weekends. Our student puts her book back on those shelves since she finished reading it the night before.

Homeroom time begins, and the students and teacher sit in a circle on the floor or at their desks to hold their morning meeting. A check in question is asked and answered, the morning memo is read, and a poem or short section of a biography sets the day with something inspiring to think about, and the day is started. The Spanish teacher, chattering away in their native tongue, takes our student's class for a stroll through the school garden. They pass another class, sitting on blankets, narrating *Treasure Island* during their literature lesson while another class loads up to go to Gilfillan Farm USC, PA, for a science field study. Meanwhile, inside, mentors from Higher Voice Studio lead a class in song and poetry during their history lesson, and little ones take a peek through the door. A couple of students were off task, and when their teacher "reset" them, to stop and think and to return "ready for learning" then the teacher welcomed them back. The teacher was quick to recognize things they did well to keep them

focused on the positive. Meanwhile, a class leaves the music room, practicing their Solfege hand motions as they head back to their room to play with their Word Study cards from today's *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. On their way, they quietly pass by 2 students in cello lessons. The morning is full of subjects such as history, reading, literature, math, composition, science, lab, dictation, Spanish, citizenship, geography, and natural history.

The morning is broken up to give the students a quick break: free play! A group of students play Four Square in a playground full of children of all ages who chase one another to capture a flag and build little towns in a mob of trees. Some older students in a small band practice their latest composition while some little ones sit and listen.

After break, our student sits with her teacher and classmates on the floor to read history. They are reading about WWII through the eyes of the Navajo in the narrative living book, *Navajo Code Talkers*. Each student reads a paragraph, and at some point, the teacher tells the students to close their books. He calls on a student randomly. That student tells back what was read but forgot a section. Another child pipes up to fill in the gap. Then our student asks a question. Another shares an idea that popped into her head. The teacher refrains from interrogating with questions to allow the children to make their own connections. This is the method of Narration. Then, the class reads aloud some more together, and then the students partake again in retelling, student questioning and dialogue that is called "the grand conversation." They might tell it back orally in pairs, they might write a narration, or they might draw it or act it out! Finally, students head back to their tables to write individual Narrations of the entire reading. This takes about thirty to forty minutes in all. Afterwards, the students have a science lab.

Today, teachers from some other classes sit in the back of the classroom to watch the history and science lab for their Lesson Study. Later, these teachers will meet with our student's teacher to talk about what they observed. As teachers have found in Japan, this is a simple yet powerful professional development program.

When the morning work is done, students take their bagged lunches outside to eat on the picnic tables with their teacher and then run off to play. Today, the high school students are off to their weekly internships to shadow in the workplace. Some walk. Some drive.

During their hours away, the rest of the students are busy with afternoon work that includes some of the following: handwork, art, music, instrument lessons, dance, drama, PE, picture study, nature study, gardening, service projects and composer study. Some observe beautiful music, art and natural specimens, often copying what they see in oil pastels or watercolors. One class heads down the street to a local park for nature study, while another class takes off with local naturalist, Porcupine Pat, for a hike through the woods behind the schoolhouse. Some older students teach their peers in Student Led Classes, while a young class practices their piano lessons. In the middle school, a group of students memorizes lines for the upcoming Shakespeare play while two boys

choreograph the sword fight. Some students design and sew Elizabethan costumes with the help of a local seamstress and tailor, and some build King Lear's throne with the help of a local carpenter.

While the students were at Gilfillan Farm, the staff couldn't help but to comment on the attentiveness and intellectual curiosity that the students showed. They were respectful, polite, inquisitive, and highly engaged.

When the busy day draws to an end, children choose their good book for their nightly reading, some jot down a wonderful quote that inspired them in their Commonplace Books, and others remember to take home their Shakespeare lines to practice. Then, the whole school busily cleans their classrooms and the school- one class waters the school garden, another vacuums the hallway, some dust their shelves, others sweep the wood floors, and a group takes out the trash, passing by some students beating a big rug and others feeding their class pet. The teacher then ends the day with the Habit Tracker, reminding students to evaluate themselves on the growth of a habit they want to instill in themselves. Then a child reminds the class that they have an issue they need to resolve. The teacher facilitates a restorative circle, and the class finds ways to restore the broken relationships. Finally, they end with a fun check-out question to end on a positive note!

The children walk off to home, jump onto the bus, or meander outside to the Lego or garden club, or walk to the gym for archery practice. The older ones take off to the gym for sports practice. A couple of students ask to stay after to practice some scenes in the play or to practice a difficult section of their newest instrumental piece.

No one is bored. There's too much to think about and too much to do. Yet, no one is overworked. Once at home, only a bit of reading and some recitation is required, or any missed work is made-up, so plenty of time is left for the family and the dog. At the dinner table, our student starts jabbing away in Spanish and starts discussing WWII. She uses a vocabulary word that her parents don't even know! Our student and her schoolmates had a day filled with meaningful relationships and intellectual growth, and they long to share it with others! There's lots to say, and they have the confidence to just talk about it all.

Please see Appendix A, "Instruction," for real life narratives from a parent, a student, and a public school teacher who have taken part in a Relational Education.

## Examples of Class Schedules

### Kindergarten (Kinderleben)

1	2	3	4	5	6
	7:45-8:00 Bus Duty		7:45-8:00 Bus Duty		7:45-8:00Bus Duty
8:00-8:15 Prep (15)					
8:15-8:45 FREE PLAY/Handwriting (30)					
8:45-9:00 Cit/Poetry (15)					
9:00-9:29 Morning Circle/Calendar Time (30)					
9:29-10:09 (40) Spanish	9:35-9:51 Bathroom 9:51-10:45 (54) PE	9:29-10:09 (40) Spanish	9:35-9:51 Bathroom 9:51-10:45 (54) PE	9:29-10:09 (40) Spanish	9:35-9:51 Bathroom 9:51-10:45 (54) PE
10:10- 10:30 (20) Snack	9:51-10:31 RR Duty	10:10- 10:30 (20) Snack	9:51-10:31 RR Duty	10:10- 10:30 (20) Snack	9:51-10:31 RR Duty
10:30- 11:30 (60) Reading/Math  11:30-11:45 Bathroom 11:45-12:15 (30) Lunch	10:45-11:00 (15) Snack 11:00- 12:00 (60) Reading/Math  12:00-12:15 Bathroom	10:30- 11:30 (60) Reading/Math  11:30-11:45 Bathroom 11:45-12:15 (30) Lunch	10:45-11:00 (15) Snack 11:00- 12:00 (60) Reading/Math  12:00-12:15 Bathroom	10:30- 11:30 (60) Reading/Math  11:30-11:45 Bathroom 11:45-12:15 (30) Lunch	10:45-11:00 (15) Snack 11:00- 12:00 (60) Reading/Math  12:00-12:15 Bathroom
12:15-12:55 (40) Art	12:15-1:00 (45) Lunch Nature Walk	12:15-12:55 (40) Art	12:15-1:00 (45) Lunch Nature Walk	12:15-12:55 (40) Art	12:15-1:00 (45) Lunch Nature Walk
1:00-1:30 Rest Time (30)					
1:30-1:45 Free Play					
1:45-2:15 (30) Pic/Com Study	1:45-2:15 (30) Literature	1:45-2:15 (30) Handwork	1:45-2:15 (30) Nature Study	1:45-2:15 (30) Handwork	1:45-2:15 (30) Literature
2:19-2:59 (40) Music	2:15-3:00 (45) Science/FOSS	2:19-2:59 (40) Music	2:19-3:09 Assembly or Dry Brush	2:19-2:59 (40) Music	2:15-3:00 (45) Science/FOSS

## PE & Health

	1	2	3	4	5	6
8:00-8:15	K-6 Inside Supervision	K-6 Inside Supervision	K-6 Inside Supervision	K-6 Inside Supervision	K-6 Inside Supervision	K-6 Inside Supervision
8:15-8:45	Breakfast Duty	Breakfast Duty	Breakfast Duty	Breakfast Duty	Breakfast Duty	Breakfast Duty
8:47-9:27 <b>B1</b>	<b>PREP (40)</b>	<b>PREP (40)</b>	<b>PREP (40)</b>	<b>PREP (40)</b>	<b>PREP (40)</b>	<b>PREP (40)</b>
9:29-10:09 <b>B2</b>	<b>T1: Prep (40)</b> <b>T2: 9TH PE/H</b> <b>T3: 10TH PE/H</b>	<b>9:29-9:51 RR Duty (22)</b>  9:51-10:45 KINDER PE	<b>T1: Prep (40)</b> <b>T2: 9TH PE/H</b> <b>T3: 10TH PE/H</b>	<b>9:29-9:51 RR Duty (22)</b>  9:51-10:45 KINDER PE	<b>T1: Prep (40)</b> <b>T2: 9TH PE/H</b> <b>T3: 10TH PE/H</b>	<b>Prep (22)</b>  9:51-10:45 KINDER PE
10:11-10:51 <b>B3</b>	<b>T1: Prep (40)</b> <b>T2: 9TH PE/H</b> <b>T3: 10TH PE/H</b>		<b>T1: Prep (40)</b> <b>T2: 9TH PE/H</b> <b>T3: 10TH PE/H</b>		<b>T1: Prep (40)</b> <b>T2: 9TH PE/H</b> <b>T3: 10TH PE/H</b>	
10:53-12:18 <b>B4</b>	<b>T1: 12th PE/Health</b>  <b>T2/3: 10:53-11:55 PREP (62)</b>	<b>10:50-11:55 PREP (65)</b>  11:55-12:55 2ND PE	<b>T1: 12th PE/Health</b>  <b>T2/3: 10:53-11:55 PREP (62)</b>	10:50-11:50 3RD PE  11:55-12:55 4TH PE	<b>T1: 12th PE/Health</b>  <b>T2/3: 10:53-11:55 PREP (62)</b>	<b>10:53-11:30 RR Duty (37)</b>  <b>11:30-11:55 PREP (25)</b>  11:55-12:55 1ST PE
12:20-12:55 <b>Lunch</b>	12:18-12:55 T2/T3 11:55-12:55 1ST PE		T1 12:18-12:55 T2/T3 11:55-12:55 3RD PE		T1 12:18-12:55 T2/T3 11:55-12:55 2ND PE	
12:57-2:17 <b>B5</b>	7TH PE/HEALTH	8TH PE/HEALTH	7TH PE/HEALTH	8TH PE/HEALTH	7TH PE/HEALTH	8TH PE/HEALTH
2:19-3:09 <b>B6</b>	2:19-3:19 4TH PE	2:19-3:19 6TH PE	2:19-3:19 5TH PE	8th grade Assembly	2:19-3:19 5TH PE	2:19-3:19 6TH PE
3:30-4:00	<b>10th &amp; Howard (T1 131) (T2/T3 102)</b>	<b>10th &amp; Howard (127)</b>	<b>10th &amp; Howard (T1 131) (T2/T3 102)</b>	<b>10th &amp; Howard (66)</b>	<b>10th &amp; Howard (T1 131) (T2/T3 102)</b>	<b>10th &amp; Howard (124)</b> 789/6=131/day 630/6=105/day

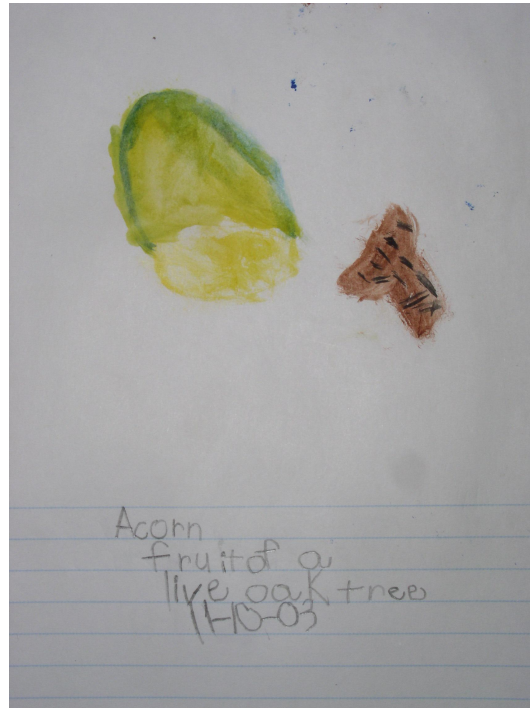
## Examples of Relational Classrooms- Homelike Environment



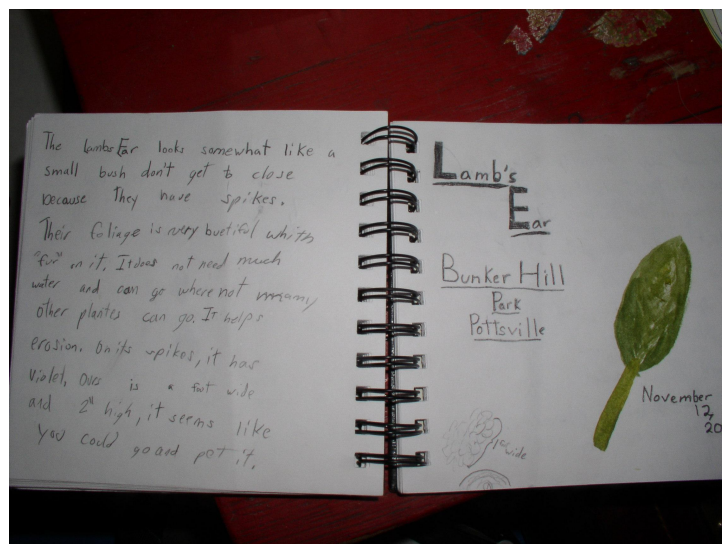
## Student Work and Assessments

### NATURE STUDIES

Year One

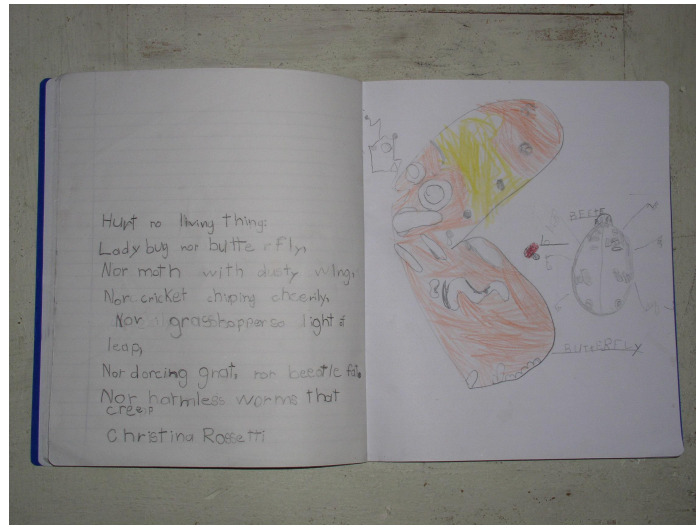


Year Four

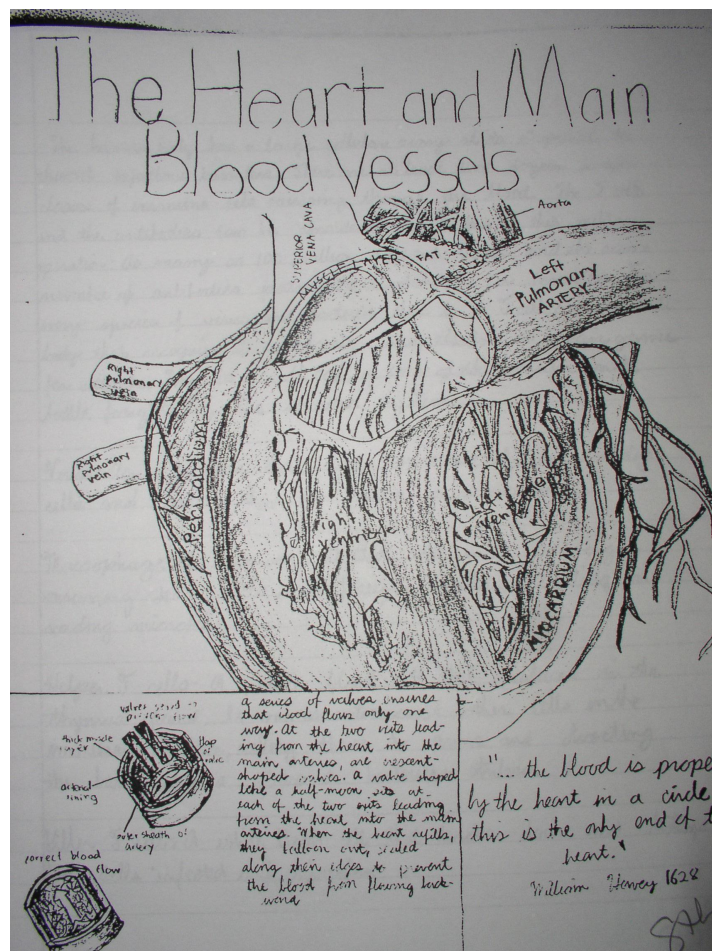




COPYWORK  
Year One



Year Eight





## NARRATION

Year Five

### From *Oliver Twist*

(Narrated by student, scribed by an adult)

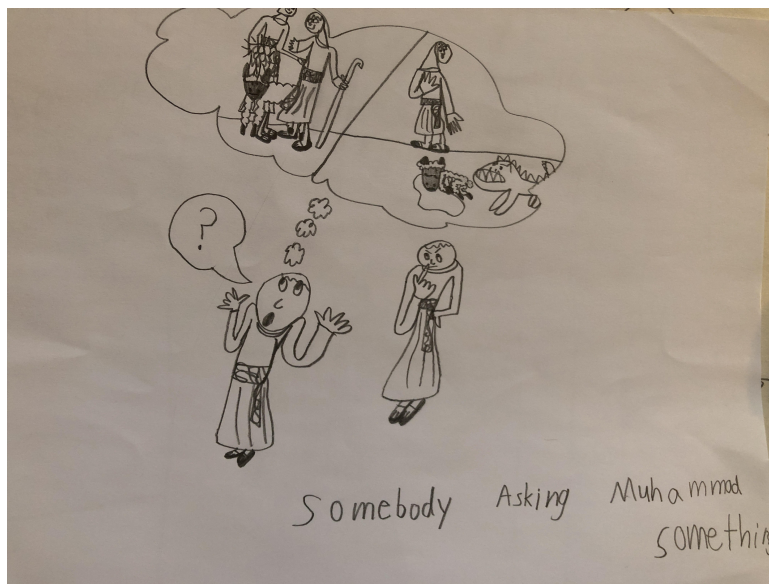
When Oliver awoke, he was in a room and very, very pale and white. There was a woman looking down on him and she asked if he was okay. He said no. He sat up and looked at a picture. After he talked to the woman he went back to a nice peaceful rest from sunup to sundown. After his sleep over many days he felt much better. He could sit up in a chair. The woman asked if he liked to look at portraits and the woman asked if Oliver liked to look at portraits. Oliver said he didn't know because he'd only seen a few. The Doctor then came and asked if Oliver was hungry and he said no. The dr. asked if he was tired, no. Are you thirsty, Oliver said yes. That's what I thought said the doctor. So Oliver was given tea.

Mr. Brownlow came to visit Oliver at the nurse's house and noticed something in the portrait. The portrait had the same eyes and face as Oliver. They all looked and they were amazed.

When Charlie Bates and the Dodger got back they laughed at what they had done to Oliver. When they thought about it more they felt bad. They went up the stairs and opened the door.

## ILLUSTRATED NARRATION

Year Four



## NARRATION

Year Seven

### The Flying Squirrel

When Bud was 12 he was given a red bandana tied around a "squirreling" object. As he opened it he was surprised to find a small flying squirrel.

Immediately he and Johnny found Nocy Bixler and together they made a small cage. Many more cages were made gradually growing in size till finally they built a seemingly perfect cage large enough for the squirrel to jump from post to post, but they wanted it to fly.

So one day they took into the woodshed where after they let it loose it glided to the rafters. Bud had to climb a ladder to retrieve her.

One night when Bud and Johnny were sleeping in the parlour bed because of a cold front, Bud realized the tall posts of his bed would be a perfect location to train Flying Lady. They slipped out and brought her into the parlour. It was perfect she hopped gracefully from post to post, but at the beginning she had trouble listening to Bud, and he would have to tug her in the right direction with the leash around her foot.

For many days they trained her in this fashion in preparation for the upcoming circus. Soon she was as tame as any cat or dog. She would cuddle with the boys jumping into their arms or their pockets.

After days of training they were ready for

# HIGH SCHOOL NARRATION

Year Eleven

Year 11  
narration after chapter  
reading

## Amusing Ourselves to Death: Conclusion

2/26/08

There are two basic ways that people can lose their freedom- it can be taken away, or they can give it up. Taking away freedom has always been a royal pain. It requires soldiers, prisons, propaganda, and strategy. Usually it is accompanied by a large and monotonous tome, a *Mien Kampf* or *Das Capital*. And, it only ever sometimes works. For example, no one could take away the freedom of the American people; they would see it coming a mile away. But giving freedom up is a different matter. America is already well on the way to doing that. America is slave to television.

TV has reduced the attention span of the people to a point where something new to hold their interest must be introduced every 45 seconds. Entertainment is king, and the highest praise a junior high student can bestow on an adult is that they are "funny." We send our money to the televangelist that can hold our attention for the longest; we elect the best-looking president, in short, the best entertainer wins. Judge Judy makes ten times more money conducting a small claims court on TV than any traditional judge. We technically *have* freedom, but we don't use it, we just do whatever the man in the tube says to do.

The key to regaining the use of our freedom is not to stop watching TV, as no one would obey a command like that without a "big brother" to make them. Instead, TV has to be given the image of pure entertainment. We won't deal with serious things on TV. The news will be in the papers, not the David Letterman show, Education will be in the schools, not Sesame St, and religion will be in church, not on TV. TV will rather be reserved for light material that no one can take seriously, *Saturday Night Live* and *Monty Python*. This way we can give the serious things their full value, without depriving the public of the entertainment they crave.

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## STUDENT EXAM

Year Three

History

Narrated by student; Scribed by an adult

### **Open Ended Question:**

Tell about the end of Rome and the events that followed.

### **Student's Answer:**

The fall of Rome happened when their neighbors, the Teutons, invaded them. The Romans were totally unprepared. The Romans were either killed or became slaves. It was called the Dark Ages because these really smart people who knew how to read and write and were really educated were ruled over by people who were not that smart and couldn't read and write and weren't well educated. But not all of Rome was destroyed. There's still a part of the empire where their last king, Constantine, lived there in the capital which was not destroyed. All the Eastern Empire was not destroyed.

They were a Christian place, and their ruler was Christian, and they had the Catholic Church there. They were so religious that sometimes they would go into caves or on top of tall pillars just to be with God. We don't know how they slept and lived because there was only room on the pillars to sit. Also, there were many rich families being their daughters were being sent there to be nuns and their sons to be monks in monasteries.

What you wanted to be was a merchant's wife because you had a good home, you could afford things and nice clothes. The problem with being a lady with a rich man was that you had to give birth to children. That was your main job. It was risky because you could die and your children, so it was not a good job. There were so many diseases out there that would hurt the children and they could die, and it was your job to have as many children and to keep them alive. But if you were a merchant's wife, your main job wasn't to give birth to children and to keep them alive. It was to run the house, and do the clothes and things. The thing with being a poor man's wife was that you might not have enough money to buy food, you might not have enough money to buy clothes, and you might not even have a house.

Life for women. You had no say on who you would marry. Your family married you off to someone. No one cares about your opinion. You have no say. Basically, you can't work, you have to do the clothes, have the house, have the children. It wasn't very pleasant for women back then.

You might want to be a poor man's wife if that poor man works on a mill where there's a family. You have to stay on that mill- your children, your children's children. Everyone has to stay to work for the owner of that mill. Your guaranteed food and clothes as long as you work for him. You have little piece of land that you can grow a little garden and vegetables. Everyone shares the same well. Usually these owners are knights. I'll tell you about these knights later. It's a pretty nice gig. Unless you're doing that, you really don't want to be a poor man's wife.

Now we're going to talk about the knight's life. It's a very confusing order. You sent a royal family boy off to be a page, and he grows up and he become a vassal and

he's assigned a knight. He cuts his food for him and serves his food for him and things. When he's an adult, he becomes a knight. He pledges his loyalty to the king and becomes a knight. It's not just that simple. There are things you must do as a knight. Unless there's war, you relax on land...a mill, a home, you sell it to someone else and you're their lord. When there's war, the king sends out recruiters to get knights for the war. Some of them will sell a piece of their land to a man and he will pledge his loyalty to that lord. Instead of him going out to war, he'll tell that man to go to war for him. If he doesn't do that, he has to go to war. Then it ends that the king doesn't get his knight. That guy goes out, and the knight still gets the money and everything even though that guy is going out to fight for him. He's fighting for the land he's getting off his land. That's how it works. But, there's another way. If the knight doesn't sell the land and he doesn't want to go out to war, then he's in trouble. The other knights will come and get you, and the king will force to go to war. That's how knights work.

Castles: You hear fairy tales about knights and kings and princess who live in this luxurious castle and are waited on hand and foot. Well, that really is a fairy tale because those castles are really smelly and dirty and you go to the bathroom in these little like out house potties, but they are made of clay, and it goes right out to the mote and that's why it smells. It's really drafty and cold during the winter. Knights never take a bath if they live in the castle but once a year, so they have to stay away from their dorms or where they sleep. SO it's not that nice to live in castles like in the fairy tales.

Why this was happening over there, down in Media, Mohammad believed that he had a vision that an angel came down and said, "Go out and start a new religion." That's exactly what Mohammad did. He told his wife, and she became the first follower. He told his family members and friends, and they became followers. But when he went out to tell people he didn't know, they thought that he was just crazy. They thought that he could hurt the people in the city, so they came up with a scheme to kill him. But Mohammad learned of the scheme and took his wife, his children, his belongings and all his followers from Media to a neighboring city, and this was called The Flight. He kept having these visions of things, and one of the followers would write down his vision on palm leaves because he couldn't write. But later they were made together and put into their bible, the Koran. So, he died, and different people are chosen. One person went out and conquering African space by the Mediterranean Sea, and he went all they way up to a town on a river in France where Charlemagne went out a stopped him from going any further. SO now they have to go all the way back around and conquer the part of the Eastern Empire- Constantinople. But they couldn't get in because they couldn't make it through the gates because they kept pouring boiling water or hot tar over them. They couldn't make it through Constantinople to get to Europe. SO they stopped there. They tried to go into Persia and won them. When people rebelled, he went to Persia and they protected him. Many cities are Islam today. Their god is Allah. And they have mosques with domed roofs, and their sign is the crescent moon. They have towers that the mullah tells them to pray. So no matter what they are doing, they drop down to pray and they always face Mecca. They pray five times a day. And, you are supposed to make it to Mecca one time in your life, at least one time. What do you think would happen if they didn't make it to Mecca? Maybe we could look it up in the Koran.



## NARRATIVE REPORT CARD EXCERPT

<b>The Humanities (History, Literature, Poetry, Citizenship)</b>
<b>T2 Comments</b> In Literature, Student actively participated in the reading and discussions of <i>Where the Red Fern Grows</i> , developing some understanding of the characters and the plot through her narrations. She carefully studied the Hundred Years' War, and she adequately knows the bravery and determination of young Joan of Arc. While reading the <i>Pushcart War</i> , she thoroughly examined and comprehended the turning point of the plot and the changing character traits. Student has contributed greatly to Grand Conversations with great effort by providing basic thoughts and ideas she developed from the living ideas from her readings.
<b>Language Arts</b>
<b>T2 Comments</b> Student is currently reading at the Fountas and Pinnell S reading level, with developing accuracy, fluency, and expression, which is low for grade level. Because of her efforts in her reading group, she shows a secure ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate a story and ideas. She sometimes makes inferences to connect at a higher level with her text and the living ideas at a beginning level. Her handwriting skills demonstrate great attention to details with some ability to transfer her skills to her daily writing. Student maintained her word study level at Within Words. Practicing her spelling patterns and continuing to read will increase her word knowledge.

See Appendix A for more examples of a narrative report card.

### I.1.B. The overarching vision of the school:

To offer such a Charlotte Mason relational education that accomplishes our mission, the school will operate in these three ways:

#### 1. Postmodern Approach for the Conceptual Age

The School's approach is unique. Dogwood Charter School is not a traditional academic center based on the *rational, behaviorist paradigm* used during the Industrial/Modern and Information Ages. Instead, the School is a schoolhouse community based on a *relational, humanist paradigm* designed to fit the emerging postmodern Conceptual Age. (Goffee & Jones, 2000; Robinson, 2001; Friedman, 2005; Pink, 2005; Gardner, 2006; Senge, 2006)

This postmodern paradigm is based on the personhood of students and adults, who

are not treated as machines to be programmed and manipulated through behaviorism. Students and adults are persons who learn through community, the integration of creativity, and such relational skills as collaborating, empathizing, and synthesizing (Pink, 2005; Gardner, 2006; Senge, 2006).

“In these postmodern times we are rediscovering the importance of community...We strive to provide a caring environment where individuality is preserved, but not at the cost of cohesiveness and community. Here children can learn not only the academic knowledge required for success in the world, but can also find spiritual and physical maturity” (Senge, 2006, p.53).

## 2. Relational Education Framework

A relational education, one based on Charlotte Mason’s (1842-1923) framework, constitutes a learning community that relies on relationships, discipline and concepts to help students meet state learning standards, while also preparing them for a full life in a changing world. We do not see students and adults as automatons, but as born persons who need to know material and information to better live life. The goal is to learn knowledge to learn how to live, not just to learn knowledge. This is what we hope for students: *The Full Human Life*.— “...we should have a great educational revolution once we cease to regard ourselves as assortments of so-called faculties and realise ourselves as persons whose great business it is to get in touch with other persons of all sorts and conditions, of all countries and climes, of all times, past and present. History would become entrancing, literature, a magic mirror for the discovery of other minds, the study of sociology, a duty and a delight. We should tend to become responsive and wise, humble and reverent, recognising the duties and the joys of the full human life.... when our ideal for ourselves and for our children becomes limited to prosperity and comfort, we get these, very likely, for ourselves and for them, but we get no more” (Mason, 1925, pg 82-83).

## 3. A public school offering a relational education in the Chartiers Valley School District

- Dogwood will offer this relational education to the families and teachers of Scott Township and the surrounding communities.
- Dogwood will use the Charlotte Mason Institute to become a Charlotte Mason accredited school.
- The school will open in 2022 with K-8.
- A ninth grade will be added the next year, 2023, and the pattern will continue with high school grades being added during the following years until the school is serving kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grades.
- The school and classes are intentionally small.

## **I.2. Measurable Goals and Objectives:**

### **I.2.A. The school's measurable academic goals and objectives to promote student learning:**

**Goal #1:** Dogwood Charter School (DCS) will prepare students for entry into higher education.

#### **Objectives:**

- 1) 80% of DCS graduates will enter some form of education after high school.
- 2) 100% of DCS students will participate in an internship program during their high school years to help them plan for their future education upon graduation.

**Goal #2:** Demonstrate student achievement and school success.

#### **Objectives:**

- 1) At least 75% of the faculty will be certified or licensed teachers.
- 2) 100% of non-certified teachers will be highly educated experts in their fields.
- 3) On average, the Standardized test scores will increase over the term of the charter.
- 4) CMI Assessment program will randomly select 30% of students' exams each year. Of that 30%, 75% will earn a passing score.

**Goal #3:** Maintain aligned curriculum to PA state academic standards and CMI's relational model standards to implement a comprehensive school-wide relational curriculum.

#### **Objectives:**

- 1) Complete one-week intensive Relational Education training to maintain the alignment between CMI/DCS curriculum and the Pennsylvania state academic standards.
- 2) Annually, faculty and administration examine data collected from PSSA's and the CMI to tighten the alignment between the relational curriculum and the PA state academic standards.

**Goal #4:** Develop a sustainable, student-directed system to select and integrate relational projects and community partnerships into curriculum.

#### **Objectives:**

- 1) 100% of DCS students will participate annually in at least one *community* service event inspired by PA standards and derived from the CMI curriculum.
- 2) 100% of DCS students will participate annually in at least one *environmentally-focused* event inspired by PA standards and derived from CMI curriculum and community needs.



**Goal #5:** Achieve CMI–model-school certification by Year Five of operation.

**Objectives:**

- 1) The School's faculty and staff successfully complete relational training on relational instruction, curriculum, assessment and governance per CMI certification protocol.
- 2) The School's faculty and staff successfully complete relational education training to maintain the alignment between CMI/DCS curriculum and the Pennsylvania state academic standards per CMI certification protocol.
- 3) The School's faculty and staff successfully complete relational education training on writing and scoring examinations per CMI certification protocol.
- 4) The School's faculty and staff successfully complete relational education training on the CMI Assessment Process on Student Performance.
- 5) The School's faculty and staff successfully complete SaferSanerSchools training through the International Institute of Restorative Practices by Year Three. By Year Four, at least one faculty member will complete Trainer Training, becoming a teacher trainer based at DCS.
- 6) Faculty submits to CMI individual Relational Education professional growth plans and assessment forms developed by the school.
- 7) At the end of each trimester, DCS submits examination papers for evaluation by CMI.
- 8) Achieve the Relational Model School status in 2026.

**Goal #6:** DCS students will be highly satisfied with the school's educational program.

**Objectives:**

- 1) At least 90% of the projected enrollment goals will be met each year.
- 2) On average, there will be at least an 80% student retention rate each year (i.e., students who stay at the school after their enrollment).
- 3) Develop a reliable survey to determine students' attitudes toward the relational education program.
- 4) 75% of students will give "highly satisfied" marks for all key areas of student satisfaction surveys.

**AIMS and IDEAS:**

To meet these goals and to carry out the objectives, instruction and curriculum will be guided by the following academic aims and ideas for students:

**1. Language Acquisition**

- **Includes:** reading, composition, recitation, oral language, spelling, foreign language, handwriting
- **Aims:**
  - to read a variety of material with comprehension and fluency
  - to make connections and meaning

- to write a variety of material with skill
- to communicate effectively and responsibly across the curriculum in a variety of ways
- written, oral, dramatic and illustrated narrations; student talk; copywork; transcription; written exams to open-ended questions; recitations; theater; music; art

▪ **Captain Ideas**

1. How and why do we communicate?
  - Purposes
  - Methods
  - In different cultures
  - Technologies
  - Inter-relationships
2. How do you choose what to read and write, and what motivates you?
3. What is good writing?
4. What is literacy?
5. How does culture affect literature?
6. How does literature affect and reflect life?
7. How are reading and writing important to me?

**2. Mathematics**

- **Includes:** solving problems, mathematical reasoning

▪ **Aims:**

- to solve mathematical problems
- to reason mathematically
- to communicate mathematical concepts and processes
- to apply and extend mathematical concepts and processes

▪ **Captain Ideas:**

1. What does it mean to be mathematically literate and why is it important?
  - How do we overcome math anxiety?
  - How do we think and behave like mathematicians?
  - How do we communicate mathematically?
2. How do we find and solve problems?
3. What are the applications of math?
  - What is an economy?
  - What are patterns?
4. How does math effect / affect diverse cultures?
  - Historically?
  - Currently?
  - In the future?

**3. Health and Fitness**

- **Includes:** physical education, karate, competitive sport, health

▪ **Aims:**

- to maintain an active and healthy life
- to build strength, balanced movement, focus and self-control, through the practice of karate.
- to actively participate in exercise and sport with skill
- to grow awareness of growth/development patterns, health risks, nutrition, and safety

▪ **Captain Ideas:**

1. What are ways to stay healthy for life?
2. Why is it necessary to stay fit and healthy?
3. What are the benefits to a healthy life?
4. How are relationships respected in competitive sports?
5. What do team players do, and how do they act and relate?
6. What are important physical, mental and relational skills in sport and fitness?

#### 4. The Arts

- **Include:** visual art, architecture, theater, dance, music

▪ **Aims:**

- to appreciate the arts in all forms, through study of the world's great master artists.
- to develop an eye for beauty, and to take delight in creating and performing art.

▪ **Captain Ideas:**

1. What are the arts?
2. What is an artist?
3. What makes my creation art, and why do people create?
4. What is beauty?
5. How do we express ideas through the arts?
6. What are ideas and feelings we experience through the arts?
7. How does culture influence the arts or arts influence culture?
8. How do people of different cultures use the arts to reflect values and attitudes of the individual, the community, and society?
9. How do artists contribute to cultures?
10. How are the arts influenced by historical events or historical events influenced by arts?

#### 5. Science

- **Includes:** the various sciences, natural history, nature study

▪ **Aims:**

- to critically observe
- to develop wonder and to discover awe through nature study.
- to use and reason scientific concepts and principles
- to conduct scientific investigations
- to know and apply core concepts/principles of social, physical, life

and earth sciences through well written books, real things, inquiring experiments and practical applications

- **Captain Ideas:**

1. What are the relationships between humans and natural resources and their effect on each other and our daily lives?
2. What are the issues determining and affecting my responsibility to planet earth? Where do I fit in?
3. How does the scientific process and research improve my ability to find solutions?
4. Define system(s) and its/their purpose and effects on existence.
5. How does technology and innovation affect our lives? (past, present, future)

## **6. Social Sciences**

- **Includes:** world history, Pennsylvania history, American history, geography, citizenship/government, economics, handwork

- **Aims:**

- to synthesize, analyze and interpret historical and civic accounts and artifacts from multiple perspectives
- to understand how social and economic systems operate in order to thrive in increasingly complex social systems
- to understand and practice one's own responsibility towards self and others

- **Captain Ideas:**

1. What is culture?
2. How do religious beliefs affect culture?
3. How and why do cultures and regions interrelate?
4. How can we learn from the past to enhance the present and to create the future?
5. How is my sense of chronology?
6. What do we have in common?
7. How do habits and work help me to be a responsible citizen and "neighbor?"

### **I.2.B. The school's measurable non-academic goals and objectives to promote student performance:**

**Goal #1:** All staff will be highly satisfied with the school's operation and design.

**Objectives:**

- 1) On average, at least 80% of the staff will return to the school each year.
- 2) On average, there will be at least a 90% daily attendance rate for staff each year.
- 3) 90% of staff will give "highly satisfied" marks for all key areas of the staff satisfaction surveys.

**Goal #2:** DCS families will be highly committed to the school and will be actively involved in school activities.

**Objectives:**

- 1) At least 80% of parents will sign the parent volunteer form indicating a willingness to be called upon to volunteer time and effort to school activities and projects.
- 2) Each year, there will be at least 10 family members in attendance at every community event held at the school.
- 3) 80% of parents will give “highly satisfied” marks for all key areas of the community satisfaction surveys.

**Goal #3:** DCS will have a positive impact on the surrounding community.

**Objectives:**

- 1) DCS students will organize and operate at least one major fundraising or service activity to benefit a community agency each year.

**AIMS and IDEAS:**

To meet these goals and to carry out these objectives, the education program will be guided by the following non-academic aims and ideas for students:

1. Non-academic Aims:

a. Effective Communicator

The Effective Communicator comprehends and uses words, pictures, styles, and symbols for creating, conveying, and processing thoughts in all learning areas.

- Demonstrates progress in her/his reading, writing, speaking, visual expression, kinesthetic and interpersonal skills in all learning areas.
- Organizes and conveys feelings, ideas, and information appropriate for purposes and audiences.
- Receives, comprehends, interprets, and responds to verbal and non-verbal information and messages.
- Communicates in a wide variety of media with clarity, engagement and personal style.
- Demonstrates the accepting, supporting behaviors of an active listener and contributor with a respectful, open, focused and inquisitive mind.
- Recognizes, respects and explores the unique benefits of diversity in methods of communication and languages.

b. Community and Global Contributor

The community and global contributor will demonstrate an appreciation and respect for diverse populations. The contributor will compare the roles of cultures and the arts that enrich both the individual and society.

- Demonstrates knowledge of his/her community/culture and other diverse communities and cultures.
  - Provides services to the community.
  - Reflects on her/his role as a community contributor.
  - Examines ways culture and the arts reflect history, beliefs and traditions.
  - Understands the interdependence of people and takes responsibility for the preservation of the local and world environments.
- c. Self-Directed Learner/Worker
- The self-directed learner will use a disciplined mind (Gardner, 2006), be an independent worker, willingly take risks, overcome new challenges, build a foundation of knowledge, skills and attitudes and constantly self-reflect.
- Demonstrates positive attitudes toward learning, personal well being and self esteem.
  - Accepts responsibility for his/her action
  - Sets goals and makes plans to attain them.
  - Uses questions, imagination, reflection, research and technology to research, learn and interpret information differently.
  - Monitors, records and evaluates progress toward personal and learning goals and outcomes.
  - Honors and practices “special habits of mind” for each discipline when engaged in integrated collaborative learning/assessment units.
- d. Complex Thinker
- The complex thinker thinks and cares about the world and people around them. The complex thinker will demonstrate synthesizing and creative minds (Gardner, 2006) and will demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills and strategies of decision making and problem-solving in all curriculum and relational areas.
- Critical Thinking Skills
    - Identifies cause and effect relationships.
    - Recognizes her/his own and other's assumptions.
    - Draws inferences and uses analogies.
    - Applies, analyzes, synthesizes and evaluates all types of information including technology.
  - Creative Thinking Skills
    - Uses curiosity and imagination to expand upon existing concepts by integrating original ideas.
    - Seeks unconventional alternatives.
    - Take risks in pursuing plans and ideas.
    - Integrates seemingly unrelated ideas.
  - Decision Making
    - Recognizes that a problem exists and demonstrates the ability to

- establish criteria.
  - Asks good probing questions.
  - Thinks respectfully and ethically.
  - Tests possible solutions.
  - Makes decisions based on these criteria.
- Problem Solving
  - Defines problems before solving.
  - Consults resources and gathers a wide range of information.
  - Uses information and skills from previous experiences.
  - Draws logical conclusions from available information.
  - Makes predictions related to the future.
- e. Collaborative Learner
 

The collaborative learner is a respectful and ethical thinker (Gardner, 2006) who demonstrates a willingness to work cooperatively with others in solving problems, making decisions, listening, sharing opinions, negotiating compromises and helping a group to pursue and achieve individual and group goals and outcomes.

  - Openly accepts, shares and offers praise, constructive criticism, and individual differences as a functioning group member.
  - Evaluates and monitors one's own behavior within the group.
  - Demonstrates responsibility as a contributing team leader and quality worker in meeting the group's goals and outcomes.
  - Identifies verbal and nonverbal information through emotional intelligence, and demonstrates interactive and effective communication skills with others.
  - Applies appropriate problem solving skills in the decision making process of the group.
- 2. Non-academic Captain Ideas:
  - a. Human Interaction with the Environment
    1. How does the environment or geography affect history, culture and the future?
    2. How do human beings interact with their environment?
    3. How is my mental map?
    4. What is special about different places?
    5. How do regions change?
    6. How does the movement of people, goods and ideas affect our lives?
  - b. Values, Beliefs, Political Ideas and Institutions
    1. What does it mean to be human, to will and to choose?
    2. Who am I? What is my place in society, and who cares?
    3. What are the issues and problems? How do we respond to them?
    4. What do people believe and value?
    5. What is freedom and justice?

6. How do people govern?
  7. What is power, and who has it?
  8. What is a citizen?
  9. How do people produce, distribute and consume goods and services responsibly and ethically?
- c. Conflict and Cooperation
1. What is conflict?
  2. How do we resolve individual and group conflict?
  3. Why war?
  4. How can we contribute to a more peaceful world?
- d. Patterns of Social Interaction
1. What is ought?
  2. What are universal notions of morality?
  3. How do we treat each other?
  4. How does the treatment of others affect society?
  5. How do people organize themselves?
  6. How do people communicate?
  7. What is a family, and how does it make a difference?
  8. What is a community?

### **I.3. Educational Program:**

#### **I.3.A. The educational program of the school with an overview of the curriculum and the content in all subject areas**

1. **Relational Education Program** - A Relational Education, one based on Charlotte Mason's (1842-1923) framework, constitutes a learning community that relies on relationships, discipline, and concepts to help students meet state learning standards while also preparing them for a full life in a changing world. Mason did not see students and adults as automatons but as born persons who needed to know material and information to better live life. The goal is to learn knowledge for life application, not knowledge for knowledge's sake. This is what she hoped for students.

*"The Full Human Life.—I think we should have a great educational revolution once we ceased to regard ourselves as assortments of so-called faculties and realized ourselves as persons whose great business it is to get in touch with other persons of all sorts and conditions, of all countries and climes, of all times, past and present. History would become entrancing, literature, a magic mirror for the discovery of other minds, the study of sociology, a duty and a delight. We should tend to become responsive and wise, humble and reverent, recognizing the duties and the joys of the full human life.... when our ideal for ourselves and for our children becomes limited to prosperity and comfort, we get these, very likely, for ourselves and for them, but we get no more."* (Mason)



Students experience the full human life in a Relational school. Students not only raise their reading levels, sharpen their critical thinking skills and increase their standardized test scores, but they also find themselves *caring about and acting upon* what they have learned.

Schools using this philosophy are around the world. Included in Appendix A are the following documents:

- 430 worldwide schools that used Britain's PNEU Relational Education curriculum (1904 – 1988).

- 29 relational schools currently in the US, UK and Brazil

Dogwood's Relational Education Program consists of the following:

a. **The Charlotte Mason Institute (CMI) Relational Program**

Dogwood Charter School will join the nonsectarian CMI accreditation program and implement the program because it is a Relational program based on Mason's framework for education. The Charlotte Mason Institute works with both religious and nonsectarian schools. The nonsectarian CMI program and curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of schools, thus the CMI team will work with Dogwood Charter School to ensure that the curriculum continues to meet state standards.

(This program is explained in detail throughout this application and in the appendices.)

b. **Non-Sectarian Public School Program**

Dogwood Charter School and the CMI relational education program for public schools have no religious affiliations, and DCS will be nonsectarian in all operations and will not provide any religious instruction.

c. **Components of the CMI Educational Program**

Below is a *brief* overview of the components and practices of the Program. These relational components and practices help students to make connections and meaning as they relate to others, ideas and things; thus, they meet the School's mission and vision. (More details about each are found throughout the charter application and in Appendix A.)

**Curriculum:**

- The Program offers a Broad Curriculum that is aligned to PA state academic standards and is based on ideas, hands-on learning, narrative books, habit formation and relationships.
- The CMI curriculum is aligned to the PA state academic standards by Dogwood Charter School and CMI consultants.
- The curriculum is evaluated annually by CMI and the School's board of trustees as to its relevance, rigor, and alignment to PA's state academic standards. Dogwood Charter School will be providing students with a comprehensive learning experience based upon its sister school,

Gillingham Charter School's, current curriculum that is aligned to PA's state academic standards.

(See Appendices A, K, and L for further details on the curricular program.)

**Instruction:**

- The Program only uses relational instructional practices.
  - The following strategies are unique to a Relational Education:  
(Each is explained in Section I.3.C and Appendix A.)
1. Small School
  2. Small Classes
  3. "Forms" -Multi-Aged Classes and Looping
  4. Whole Books, Narrative Texts
  5. Method of Narration (a specialized form of retelling)
  6. Method of Student Talk (instead of teacher interrogation)
  7. Method of Masterly Inactivity (minimum teacher interference)
  8. Short Class Periods
  9. Many School Subjects for All Students (instead of tracking)
  10. Weekly Nature Walks and Journaling
  11. School-wide Garden
  12. Picture Study/Composer Study
  13. Singapore Math Instruction
  14. Required Foreign Languages K-12<sup>th</sup>
  15. Required Sports Competition in Upper School and Intramurals in Middle School
  16. Required Arts K-12<sup>th</sup> (theater, dance, music, instrument, art, handwork)
  17. Required High School Internship Program
  18. Field Studies and Community Visitors
  19. Trimester Open-Ended Essay Exams (instead of quizzes, fill-in-the-blank tests)
  20. Narrative Report Cards (instead of grades in lower and middle years)
  21. Japan's Professional Development Program, "Lesson Study"
  22. Restorative Practices Disciplinary Program (non-punitive)
  23. Tastefully Decorated, Home-like, Orderly Facilities and Classrooms
  24. Parent/Student/Teacher Evening Collaborations
  25. School-wide Shared Leadership and Learning Organization Framework

**Assessment:**

The Program relies upon *authentic* assessments to evaluate student, teacher, and organizational achievement.

- Authentic student assessment includes: Narrations; Journaling; Individualized Learning Programs; Portfolios; Open Ended Exams; a unique, cooperative system of Parental Feedback and Assessment; the Parents' Notebook and Detailed Report Cards.
- Authentic adult and organizational assessment includes the following: 360° Feedback; Reflective Practices; Portfolios; Individualized Learning

Plans; Fishbowl Protocols; Japanese Lesson Studies and Organizational Action Planning.

- The Program also uses the PSSA data, data from the CMI assessment program and other forms of data to inform decision-making aimed at increasing student academic achievement.  
(Explained in further detail in Section I.4 and Appendix A.)

**Governance:**

- The Program requires a Relational Governance model that is based upon Learning Organizational principles and Shared Leadership practices (Senge). The School is led by all the learners in the learning community in a program that stresses leadership, followership, responsibility and learning. Academic *and* Social issues are addressed by the entire community (Ingersoll, 2003) - the Board of Trustees, School Directors, Teachers, Parents and even the Students, when appropriate. (Section III.2.E)
- Restorative Practices, replacing punitive discipline with a community-oriented restorative approach to school discipline, to preserve and restore relationships. Student relationships have a significant impact on the school atmosphere. The question is: how do we help students create habits of healthy relationships? Restorative Practices is one method. Restorative Practices is about focusing both students and teachers on strengthening and repairing relationships in the classroom and across the school community. The focus is also on how we prevent problems from occurring in the first place and what we need to do to ensure that practice and policy support this effort. Students need to know the limits and need to know that someone will be with them to help solve problems when needed. The emphasis is on assisting the student to repair any harm they have done and helping them to take responsibility for their actions and putting into place strategies to avoid doing the same again. The student will be asked to work together with the person or persons harmed to fix the problem. In the end, students feel better about themselves and others and learn positive ways to resolve relationship problems. They also develop essential skills for life that, over time, ensure they grow into adults that are more likely to be socially responsible, better parents, team players, employees, and leaders.

Restorative Practices have been implemented in families, in schools, across school districts, and even throughout an entire town with dramatic results for over 30 years. Central to Restorative Practices at DCS is the use of logical and natural consequences to help students learn responsibility. A consequence is a result of something a person does. A natural consequence means what happens because of something a student does. A logical consequence is a result arranged by the school but logically related to what the student did. Natural and logical consequences result from choices students make. In effect, they choose the

consequence they experience. This is a powerful way of responding to children's poor choices that not only is effective in developing good habits but is respectful of students. (Section V.4.A)

**Professional Development:**

- Each Friday students will be dismissed after lunch at 12:00. Professional Development (for faculty and staff) will be held 1:00-3:30 every Friday. A schedule will be developed so that there is structure and people know when each type of meeting is coming up and can prepare accordingly. Examples of professional development are: Monthly Charlotte Mason book clubs, Bi-Monthly Schoolhouse Development Meetings, Committees like Wellness and Safety, Data Teams, Small Team meetings (forms, admin, reading, math, etc.), Mentor/Mentee Meetings, Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) and Self-Reflection Time
- Gillingham Charter School will provide 1 half-day of board training to the Founding Board of the new charter school in Spring 2022. Provide 2 days of professional development to all founding teachers, administrators and staff in Fall/ Winter 2022. A 5 day Relational Education Training from Nicolle Hutchinson at the Dogwood Charter School in Summer/Fall 2022 to train teachers and staff. Provide eight two-hour sessions of monthly coaching to Dogwood Charter School's leadership team during the 2022-23 school year.
- CMI offers consultation and diverse training for all aspects of the program.
- Teacher-driven, innovative, research-based, and formative professional development strategies such as Japan's Lesson Study and Reflective Practices will replace summative evaluation and learning processes.
- In the Learning Organizational structure, ALL persons in the school- students, teachers, staff, parents and community members- learn and take risks together. Structures are built into the school schedule to enable teachers to lead without adding too much to their workload (Explained in detail in Section V.3.C)

**Community Relationships:**

In order to instill within students a sense of pride of who they are, where they come from, and of what they will do for their community and the world, they need to be in significant relationships in their community, discovering their heritage, their county's strengths, and ways to serve its unique needs. The Program provides various methods and strategies to foster strong community relations.

- The parents and community will teach the School's learning community through field studies, special presentations, a high school internship program, student service projects, mentoring, tutoring, handicrafts, and volunteering.
- The Charlotte Mason Institute will use the school as a practicing school, allowing educators, parents and school leaders to observe and learn

through Lesson Study.

- Student teachers from local and distant Universities will be invited to practice their craft at the School. Local professors can share their expertise with the students, teachers, staff and parents.  
(More details are found in Sections II.3.C and III.1.B.)

d. A Comparison

**Comparison and Contrast of *Rational* and *Relational* Education**

“The rationalist tradition...has distorted the idea of creativity in education and unbalanced the development of millions of people. The result is that other equally important abilities are overlooked or marginalized. This neglect affects everyone. Children with strong academic abilities often fail to discover their other abilities. Those of lower academic ability may have other powerful abilities that lie dormant.... they become disaffected, resentful of their ‘failure’ and conclude that they are simply not very bright” (Robinson, 2001, p.8).

<b>Traditional: Rational, Mechanistic</b>	<b>Dogwood : Relational, Humanistic</b>
<b>THEORY</b>	
The child is an empty vessel to fill	The child is born a person
Cause and effect explains all behavior	Cause and effect explain some behavior
<b>PRACTICE</b>	
Learning is something done to the child	The child learns from within
Learning is controlled externally	Learning is controlled internally
The teacher is a dispenser, responsible to fill up a child with knowledge and skills	The teacher is a facilitator, creating the necessary components and scaffolding for learning.
Rewards and punishment are used to control and motivate student learning.	Relationships gain obedience. Learning is motivated out of the person's natural need to know.
The child passively learns.	The child actively learns.

Knowledge is a series of isolated skills and facts to master.	Knowledge is an integration of facts and skills with concepts that make connections and foster wisdom and understanding. Skills/facts are taught in context and thus meaningful.
Knowledge is reduced to measurable objectives - standardized assessments	Knowledge is not always measurable, but is accounted for - open-ended essay exams, narrations, portfolios
Learning is the acquisition of facts and of skills through memorization and rehearsal of skills.	Learning is understanding by making connections across the content areas and seeing relationships and patterns in subject areas.
Learning is fragmented and sporadic	Learning is a continuous, sequential manner of knowledge-building that enables students to make connections.
Predefined answers are expected - textbooks, study guides, worksheets, notes - information passes through	Personal connections and meaning are expected - open-ended questions where children's minds act on the material and information does more than pass through.
Children get the expected answer	Children make connections, gaining understanding
Curriculum is narrow and highly controlled.	Curriculum is broad, deep, and full of ideas.
Curriculum is canned, marketed and disconnected.	Curriculum developed sequentially to promote learning, understanding, and knowledge based on relationships in the world.
<b>TOOLS</b>	
Facts and skills	Ideas and concepts
Teacher's mind and text	Child's mind
Teacher : Dispenser	Teacher : Facilitator AND Co-learner
Hierarchical governance	Shared learning governance

Adult-centered schedule	Student-centered schedule
Large classes and large schools	Small classes and small schools
Student learning	Student and adult learning
Student produces products	Student processes
Individual learning	Individual and communal learning
Predigested textbooks	Whole books, biographies, primary sources, picture books, nature walks, and journaling
Inquiry-based science	Inquiry-based science with literature and study in the outdoors
Answer questions at end of chapter	Narration and “student talks”
Right answers	Dialogue, imagination, risk-taking
Lecture	Whole books by experts
Single-filed metal desks	Wooden tables, grouped desks
Short recess	Short breaks and long recess
Indoor life	Outdoor life
Multiple choice tests	Open-ended exams
Competition provides motivation	Relationships and Internal motivation
Prizes and rewards	Natural consequences and internal motivation
Punishment	Natural consequences and restorative practices
Grading	Internal motivation
Report cards full of letters and numbers	Report cards full of details/suggestions
“Specials” and electives	All take part in the broad curriculum
Utilitarian environment	Beautiful environment
Adults care for student’s learning	Student cares for student’s learning

Adults take care of school	Everyone takes care of school
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## 2. Curriculum Overview

Dogwood Charter's School's curriculum will include all required subjects by the PA department of education and will be aligned with the PA state academic standards. In a Relational Curriculum, the child is related to as a person. Only books, programs and activities that meet the natural laws of human learning are included. Every person has a mind, which needs ideas to think about, thus we offer a generous or broad curriculum that is full of ideas and things to think about and do. To truly "feed" the mind, then, the broad curriculum must be full of rich, rigorous, relevant learning that is delightful, intriguing and challenging.

- a. The following critical elements constitute a rich, rigorous, relevant, broad curriculum:  
(See Appendix A for a more in depth explanation.)

### 1. Alignment with State Standards and Testing

*data informed decision-making increases student achievement and test scores*

When standardized tests are used as FORMATIVE assessments that inform school decision-making, they become powerful teaching tools. The curriculum is aligned to state standards to meet the law and to set students up for success on the state's standardized tests. Since states and provinces have differing content standards, schools using CMI's curriculum will align the CMI content (scope and sequence) to meet state/province requirements. Dogwood Charter School's curriculum is aligned to Pennsylvania's standards. CMI assists in the alignment and helps schools research good books, real things and field studies to meet state standards and Relational Education standards.

Research:

- *Mapping a course for improved student learning: How innovative schools systematically use student performance data to guide improvement.* Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education. (Supovitz J.A., & Klein, V. 2003).
- *Data analysis for comprehensive school wide improvement.* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, 1-53, 99-134 (Bernhardt, V. 1998).
- *Results: The key to continuous school improvement.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (Schmoker, M. 1996).

### 2. Ideas

*focus learning, deepen student understanding and foster inquiry*



Our curriculum will support at every turn, the revelation of ideas and their consequences. We believe that “every relation must be initiated by its own ‘captain idea,’ sustained upon fitting ideas; and wrought into the material substance of the person by its proper habits” (Mason, 1925, p.71).

Research:

- “Big ideas focus learning, deepen student understanding, and foster inquiry into important ideas and issues” (Seif, 2003, p.54).
- Basic content, facts and skills are not neglected because they help solve, evaluate, synthesize, compare or illustrate the big ideas. Such a balanced approach is effective, and in literacy instruction, it is referred to as balanced literacy. Children learn literacy skills such as phonemes and punctuation or mapping skills and important historical facts and use them when reading whole books, biographies, and rich expository text and when processing projects, all full of ideas used to ignite critical thinking (Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley, 2007).
- “Science education can build a knowledge base focused on essential concepts, rather than disconnected topics or bits of information” (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.116)
- “Understanding large ideas and themes and developing inquiring habits of mind, in other words, are the central goals for teaching and learning science” (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.11).
- “Teaching should present key topics with enough concrete detail and hands-on involvement to make them interesting and memorable, but not with so much that the main ideas are obscured and that students believe that memorizing a collection of details or carrying out a collection of steps constitutes understanding those ideas” (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2000, p.225).

### 3. Sequential History

*increases prior knowledge, reduces student confusion, facts are learned in a meaningful context*

Bransford, Brown & Cocking (1999) demonstrate that students are more likely to learn and remember concepts if they are connected to prior knowledge. In best practices, new learning is always attached to prior knowledge, or background knowledge is built for the attachment. This is scaffolding and is assisting children through what Vygotsky called the Zone of Proximal Development. Thus, much of the curriculum pivots around history, and history is taught sequentially.

Research:

- Postman, Neil. “Learning by Story.” *The Atlantic Monthly* 264 no. 6 (1989).
- Roschelle, J. (1995). Learning in interactive environments: Prior knowledge and new experience. In J. H. Falk & L. D. Dierking, *Public institutions for personal learning: Establishing a research agenda*.

Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 37-51.

- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Putney, L., & Wink, J. (2002). *A vision of Vygotsky*. Boston, Mass: Allyn and Bacon.
- Langer, J.A. (1982). Facilitating text processing: The elaboration of prior knowledge. In J. A. Langer & M. T. Smith-Burke (Eds.), *Reader meets author/bridging the gap* (pp. 142-162). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds), (1999). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press
- In their study of instruction, Michael Pressley and his colleagues identified the following characteristics of instruction by exemplary first grade teachers: literature is emphasized, there is much reading and writing... connections are made across the curriculum throughout the day... (Wilson et al., 2004, p.245).

#### 4. Critical Multiculturalism

*engages more learners, fosters positive relationships, respect and self-identity*

The program ascribes to a “critical multiculturalism” as opposed to the “politically correct multiculturalism.” Critical multiculturalism “aims for social transformation by seeking social justice and equality among all people rather than merely celebrating differences...” (Norton & Tooley). The study of people and perspectives is integrated into the curriculum and books and activities. It is not “added on” as an extra idea to study.

#### Research:

- “White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism” (Julio Cortázar)
- *Mediating Boundaries of Race, Class, and Professional Authority as a Critical Multiculturalist* by Jennifer E. Obidah, 2000.
- Social studies should explore a full variety of the cultures found in America, including students’ own backgrounds and understandings of other cultures’ approaches to various social studies concepts (Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde, 1998).
- Banks, J. (2004). Democratic citizenship education in multicultural societies. In J. Banks (Ed) *Diversity and Citizenship Education*. San Francisco: CA, Jossey-Bass.
- Gewertz, C. (June 12, 2007). Diplomas Count. *Education week*.
- Pittman, K. & Irby, M. (2007) Engaging every learner. In Blankstein, A., et al. (Eds).
- Rennebohm F. K., & Gragert, E. (2003) Global education for today’s world:

Creating hope with online learning communities. In D. Gordon (Ed). *Better teaching and learning in the digital classroom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 141-157.

- Stewart, V. (April 2007). Becoming citizens of the world. *Educational Leadership*. 64:7. 8-14.
- Gay, G. (December/January 2004) The importance of multicultural education. *Educational Leadership*, 30-35.
- Nieto, S. (2000). Multicultural education and school reform, In *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman, 303-48.

#### 5. Trust in the Deep Respectfulness of Teachers, Pedagogy & Professional Development

*improves teaching which increases student achievement, teachers model life-long learning*

An underlying assumption of this curriculum is that the teachers (and parents) will need to be learners who become well-versed and are supported in all Relational principles and ways. The curriculum is not simply another book list to be applied in typical behaviorist or materialist school settings. CMI will continue to develop materials and opportunities to support this curriculum and the implementation of the entire method. This is not typical teaching. Thus, a strong relationship between the school and CMI, as well as other schools using the CMI program, will be developed to support the teachers, parents, and students as they transition through the paradigm shift in educational pedagogy. Furthermore, CMI will assess the School's practice and hold the school accountable through an accreditation program.

#### Research:

- Bolman, L. & Deal, T. (2000). People and organizations. In *Jossey-Bass Reader*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 59-69.
- Boyatzis, R. & McKee, A. (2005). *Resonant leadership*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Drago Severson, E. (2004). *Helping new teachers learn, leadership for adult growth and development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Evans, R. (1996). *The human side of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Wlodkowski, R. (1993). *How motivation affects instruction. in enhancing adult motivation to learn*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

#### 6. Unique Scheduling per Age Level

*schedules match the natural laws of learning and produce greater results*

Sylwester's research showed that the human brain can attend no longer than 30

minutes, so going beyond that is a waste of time (1997). This program adheres to and supports a schedule in keeping with the principles of short lessons, alternating subjects, and mornings for intellectual work. For exams and assessment, trimesters are preferable.

Research:

- Sylwester, R. (1997). "On Using Knowledge: A Conversation with Bob Sylwester." *Educational Leadership* 54, no. 6: 16-19.

### 7. Language, Imagination and Whole Books

*motivate, stimulate exploration, foster literacy development, provide a rich vocabulary*

Without the use of the imagination and the use of language (two of our primary tools for learning), learning does not become embedded into the long term memory. Interesting books and hands-on activities keep the mind highly engaged and thus attentive, which leads to student success. Students are taught to narrate, ask questions and discuss ideas, so their ideas and their questions matter. They are taught to take risks. Therefore, the CMI program eschews traditional textbooks and depends on well written whole books with rich language, strong vocabulary, narrative, and a love for the subject to guide the curricular choices. And, no fact is taught without its informing idea. Remembering that children are persons and that persons are social beings, historical fiction is used because the engagement of children with learning is more important than stuffing a few memorized facts into their heads. Education and facts without context have no relationship, and therefore do not stir the mind. When the brain's amygdala is not activated through the use of emotions, learning does not become personal. If it does not become personal, then there is no learning.

Research:

- "Literature motivates, provides rich vocabulary for learning, and suggests a variety of concepts to explore" (p.242). Wilson, Martens, Arya & Altwerger, (2004). Readers, instruction, and the NRP. *Kappan*, 86(3), 242-246.
- "Human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures" (Theodore Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology*, 1986, p.8).
- A well-exercised imagination is crucial to making moral and rational judgments. Both ethics and logic assume imagination as a starting point. Those who lack a dynamic imagination will never be able to grow into mature wisdom. They will always be stuck in very narrow, self-centered mental grooves, following infantile rules..... And we learn to exercise our imaginations in stories—fiction and fantasy and fairy tales most tellingly (Doug Jones, *Credenda Agenda*, Imaginative Succession, Vol. 13, Issue 2, 2007, Poetics).
- "The study of narrative and the use of stories in the work of educators is a

growing phenomenon (Carter, 1993; Jalongo, 1992, Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Narratives or stories are central to our lives in that ‘the stories we hear and the stories we tell shape the meaning and texture of our lives at every stage and juncture’” (Cooper, 1995, p.121, editors Lambert et al).

- Robbins, C., & Ehri, L.C. (1994). Reading storybooks to kindergartners helps them learn new vocabulary words. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 86, 54-64.
- Rosenhouse, J., Feitelson, D., Kita, B., & Goldstein, Z. (1997). Interactive reading aloud to Israeli first graders: Its contribution to literacy development. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 32, 168-183.
- In their study of instruction, Michael Pressley and his colleagues identified the following characteristics of instruction by exemplary first grade teachers: literature is emphasized, there is much reading and writing... connections are made across the curriculum throughout the day...” (Wilson et al., 2004, p.245).
- Postman, Neil. “Learning by Story.” *The Atlantic Monthly* 264 no. 6 (1989).

#### 8. A Living Document

*revises and maintains a curriculum that is interesting and challenging for children*

CMI includes enough choice within a content area that allows teachers to respond to the needs and particular connections of their students while meeting the PA state academic standards. Furthermore, the curriculum is not a static document. Annual curricular review and updating by the CMI design team and the School’s Board is a way to keep the highest quality of books that are written by experts in the area of study, ideas and resources before teachers and students.

#### 9. Cultural Capital

*empowers economically disadvantaged students, enriches daily life, increases chances of upward social mobility, provides challenge and interest and thus increases inward motivation*

As a result of the Relational Curriculum, students develop a power to interact with the world and ideas. Cultural Capital is a term identified by Bourdieu, and in education it simply means that students have or need non-financial social assets to help them in school. Cultural capital is strongest in the middle and upper classes, and those in the lower classes lack it (Bourdieu, 1977). Through the broad curriculum, students of all classes learn about many things, people, art, etc., thus developing strong cultural capital. A Relational Education offers relationships with the best of the arts, the best of books, and the best of ideas.

Research:

- (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davies, 2007) The family-school relationship is strongly affected by what researchers call ‘cultural capital...gives people resources they can invest...middle class, white

families had a real advantage. Their social and cultural background gave them skills and assets that allowed them to work more easily with the school than low-income African American families. Middle class black families fared somewhat better, but only as well as working class white families. Neither group fared as well as middle-class white families, because they didn't have as much power (p.139).

- De Graaf, N., De Graaf, P., & Kraaykamp, G., (2000) "Parental cultural capital and educational attainment in the Netherlands: a refinement of the cultural capital perspective" in *Sociology of Education*, v.73, i.2, pp.92–11
- Dolby, N., (2000) "Race, National, State: Multiculturalism in Australia" in *Arena Magazine*, v.45, pp.48–51
- Dumais, S., (2002) "Cultural Capital, Gender, and School Success: the role of habits" in *Sociology of Education*, v.75, i.1, pp.44–68
- Emmison, M., & Frow, J., (1998) "Information Technology as Cultural Capital" in *Australian Universities Review*, Issue 1/1998, p.41-45
- Gorder, K., (1980) "Understanding School Knowledge: a critical appraisal of Basil Bernstein and Pierre Bourdieu" in Robbins, D., (2000) *Pierre Bourdieu Volume II*, Sage Publications, London, pp.218–233
- Kalmijn, M., & Kraaykamp, G., (1996) "Race, cultural capital, and schooling: An analysis of trends in the United States" in *Sociology of Education*, v.69, i.1, pp.22–34
- Martin, B., & Szelenyi, I., (1987) "Beyond Cultural Capital: toward a theory of symbolic domination" in Robbins, D., (ed) (2000) *Pierre Bourdieu Volume I*, Sage Publications, London, pp.278–302
- Robinson, R., & Garnier, M., (1986) "Class Reproduction among Men and Women in France: reproduction theory on its home ground" in Robbins, D., (ed) (2000) *Pierre Bourdieu Volume I*, Sage Publications, London, pp.144–153
- Stanton-Salazar, R., & Dornbusch, S., (1995) "Social Capital and the Reproduction of Inequality: information networks among Mexican-origin high school students" in *Sociology of Education* (Albany), v.68, i.2

#### 10. Broad Content

*increases brain capacity, fosters high levels of interest, decreases discipline problems, engages both the right side and the left side of the brain*

The content is broad to keep students' minds engaged and challenged. There are no electives. There is no tracking. We do not offer a general education track, a college prep track or an honors track. Every student is required to take Shakespeare, Spanish, physical education, sports, music, instrument lessons, nature study, and internships. Thus, we are requiring all students to take risks and to experience success in areas they didn't know they could be successful in, which is an authentic self-esteem booster. It also requires them to use the right side of the brain and their physical body, so they are boosting dopamine and serotonin.

#### Research:

- Complex environments produce smarter brains than do boring environments. Implications: provide lots of variety in classroom activities; offer students new challenges every day. David Sousa, Ed.D
- Bottoms, G., Presson, A., & Johnson, M. (1992). Making high schools work through integration of academic and vocational education. Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board.
- The Arts: Students with high levels of arts participation outperform “arts poor” students by virtually every measure. Learning in arts has significant effects on learning in other domains. Research suggests a dynamic model in which learning in one domain supports and stimulates learning in a complex web of influence described as “a constellation.” Engagement in the arts nurtures the development of cognitive, social, and personal competencies. High arts participation makes a more significant difference to students from low-income backgrounds than for high-income students. To the researchers’ surprise, however, the youth in the arts after school programs were doing the best. (Collection of studies collectively entitled *The Impact of the Arts on Learning*)
- Sacrificing physical education for classroom time does not improve academic performance.
- On several test scores, students with enhanced PE performed better than students in control groups.
- Sallis JF, McKenzie TL, Kolody B, Lewis M, Marshall S, Rosengard P. Effects of health-related physical education on academic achievement: Project SPARK. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 1999; 70:127-134.

#### The CMI broad curricular program includes:

##### Knowledge of Humanity

- I. History
- II. Literature
- III. Citizenship
  - a. Economics
  - b. Ethics
  - c. Life Skills
- IV. Composition and Language Acquisition
  - a. Composition
  - b. Recitation
  - c. Reading Aloud
  - d. Narration
  - e. Handwriting
  - f. Transcription and Copy work
  - g. Spelling and Dictation
  - h. Grammar
  - i. Latin Grammar

- j. Foreign Languages
- V. Arts
  - a. Music (Composer Study, Chorus, Instrumental)
  - b. Visual Arts (Picture Study, 2D and 3D, Architecture)
  - c. Theater and Dance (Shakespeare, Acting, Production, Dances)
- Knowledge of the Universe
  - I. Science
    - a. Geography
    - b. Natural History
    - c. Nature Study
    - d. Physics
    - e. Chemistry
    - f. Physiology
    - g. Geology
    - h. Biology
    - i. Anatomy
    - j. Botany
    - k. Astronomy and Earth Science
    - l. Nutrition and Health
  - II. Mathematics
    - a. Arithmetic
    - b. Measurement
    - c. Algebra
    - d. Geometry
    - e. Calculus
  - III. Physical Development and Handwork
    - a. Physical Education
    - b. Competitive Sports
    - c. Handwork/Life Skills

#### b. Scopes and Sequences

Please see Appendix K to view the scopes and sequences for each content area. As stated previously, books and programs that will be taught will be reviewed and approved by the School's Board of Trustees and CMI. The books in the scopes and sequences in Appendix K will be taught the first year and will be reviewed as to their relevance.

#### c. Pennsylvania State Academic Standards and DCS's Curriculum

Dogwood's curriculum is aligned to the Pennsylvania Academic Standards. Please see Appendix L to view the correlations between Pennsylvania's state academic standards and the School's curricular program.



**I.3.B. How the School will meet the educational needs of students with disabilities in accordance with Chapter 711; the projections for special education instructional programs that will be operated directly by the charter school or operated by others under contract with the School**

Information on how the needs of English Language Learners and at risk students will be met is also provided below.

**Dogwood's Relational Special Education Program**

Philosophy:

The School's special education program will be based upon the core principles of Relation Education that all children are persons with basic human needs and distinct personalities. The special education program will be implemented in accordance with applicable federal and state law and regulations which require DCS to provide a free appropriate public education ("FAPE"). Provision of FAPE requires special education and related services which are designed to meet students' with disabilities needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living.

Methods:

Once a student is identified as requiring special education services, the Individual Education Plan ("IEP") Team will develop, review, and revise a written IEP in a meeting in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations. The IEP will provide for necessary adaptation and/or modifications of the Relational Education curriculum with all necessary related services and supports in the least restrictive environment.

DCS's Relational Education curriculum and instruction will work well for many students with special needs. For example, students with ADHD may benefit greatly from the School's short class periods and unique scheduling. Of course, the Relational Education curriculum and instruction will be modified as necessary to provide FAPE to each special education student in accordance with each student's IEP.

Staff:

**Special Education Teachers**

- o The School will hire two full-time, certified special education teachers. In year two a Director of Special Education will be appointed. A third certified special education teacher will be hired in the fifth year.
- o Each student's IEP team will be the case manager for the respective student's IEP.
  - The special education teacher will work collaboratively with the regular education teacher and related service providers to assist in implementation of the IEP.
  - Written progress monitoring will be performed in accordance with each student's IEP by all teachers and related service providers.

- This collaboration will involve indirect services to the child such as consultation and peer coaching to the regular education teacher, and direct services to the child such as team teaching, resource room, learning support, one on one instruction, differentiated instruction, etc.

#### Teacher Hiring

- o Hiring standards for all teachers include experience facilitating the teaching of children with special needs as described in Section V.3.A.

The Dogwood Charter School has received proposals from the following service providers:

- o The Allegheny Intermediate Unit
- o Justabout Pediatric Therapy

Upon charter approval, the school directors and the Board of Trustees will review these proposals and contract services. The School will contract with other service providers or with Intermediate Unit # 3 for other special education services as the enrolled students' needs are determined.

(Both proposals are found in Appendix I.)

#### The Program:

Dogwood Charter School will publish the following Annual Notice in the school's Parent-Student Handbook and on the school's website.

**Dogwood Charter School**  
**P. O. Box 13394**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15243**

#### **2021-2022 School Year**

#### ***Annual Public Notice of Special Education Services and Programs and Rights for Students with Disabilities And Notification of Rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act***

All children with disabilities residing in the Commonwealth, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, and who are in need of special education and related services, are to be located, identified and evaluated. This responsibility is required by a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 U.S.C. 1200 *et. seq.* ("IDEA 2004").

Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code requires the publication of a notice to parents regarding public awareness activities sufficient to inform parents of children applying to or enrolled in the Charter School of available special education services and programs and how to request those services and programs and of systematic screening activities that lead to the identification, location and evaluation of children with

disabilities enrolled in the Charter School.

***In addition, the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), which protects confidentiality, requires educational agencies to notify parents annually of their confidentiality rights.***

The Charter School fulfills its duties with this annual notice and has incorporated several sections of the PaTTAN Procedural Safeguards Notice and other applicable guidelines from the Pennsylvania Department of Education into the Board-approved Child Find Notice, and Policies and Procedures described below. **The Charter School also directs parents to the procedural safeguards notice from PaTTAN available at the school's main office for additional information regarding rights and services.**

Parents may contact the Charter School's Principal at, **P. O. Box 13394 Pittsburgh, PA 15243** at any time to request a copy of the procedural safeguards notice or with any other questions about special education, services, screenings, policies or procedures. The Procedural Safeguards Notice is provided to parents by the Charter School once per school year or: (1) upon initial referral or parent request for evaluation; (2) upon filing by parents of their first State complaint under 34 CFR §§300.151 through 300.153 and upon filing by parents of their first due process complaint under §300.507 in a school year; (3) when a decision is made to take a disciplinary action that constitutes a change of placement; and (4) upon parent request.

The purpose of this annual notice is to comply with the Charter School's obligations under Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code and to describe: (1) the types of disabilities that might qualify the child for special education, (2) the special education programs and related services that are available, (3) the process by which the Charter School screens and evaluates such students to determine eligibility, (4) the special rights that pertain to such children and their parents or legal guardians and (5) the confidentiality rights that pertain to student information.

A copy of this Annual Notice will also be available on the school's website.

### **Qualifying for special education and related services**

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, or "IDEA 2004," children qualify for special education and related services if they have one or more of the following disabilities and, as a result, need special education and related services: intellectual disability; hearing impairment, including deafness; speech or language impairment; visual impairment, including blindness; serious emotional disturbance; orthopedic impairment; autism; traumatic brain injury; other health impairment; specific learning disability; deaf-blindness; or multiple disabilities.

### **Section 504 Services**

Under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, some school age children with disabilities who do not meet the eligibility criteria outlined above might be eligible

for special protections and for adaptations and accommodations in instruction, facilities, and activities. Children are entitled to such protections, adaptations, and accommodations if they have a mental or physical disability that substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program and otherwise qualify under the applicable state and federal laws, including Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code and Section 504.

The Charter School must ensure that qualified students who are handicapped have equal opportunity to participate in the school program and activities to the maximum extent appropriate for each individual student. In compliance with applicable state and federal laws, the Charter School provides to each qualifying protected student who is handicapped without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities and to the extent required by the laws.

These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" may be distinct from those applicable to eligible or thought-to-be eligible students. The Charter School or the parent may initiate an evaluation if they believe a student is a protected handicapped student. For further information on the evaluation procedures and provision of services to protected handicapped students, parents should contact the school's Principal at **P. O. Box 1339 Pittsburgh, PA 15243**.

If a Charter School admits children below school age, early intervention services may be available to eligible children with special needs. Any questions about services available to children under school age should be directed to the school's Principal at **P. O. Box 13394 Pittsburgh, PA 15243**.

### **Least Restrictive Environment "LRE"**

Charter Schools ensure that children with disabilities are educated to the maximum extent possible in the regular education environment or "least restrictive environment". To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with students who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling or other removal of students with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily. Programs and services available to students with disabilities, might include: (1) regular class placement with supplementary aids and services provided as needed in that environment; (2) regular class placement for most of the school day with itinerant service by a special education teacher either in or out of the regular classroom; (3) regular class placement for most of the school day with instruction provided by a special education teacher in a resource classroom; (4) part time special education class placement in a regular public school or alternative setting; and (5) special education class placement or special education services provided outside the regular class for most or all of the school day, either in a regular public school or alternative setting.

Depending on the nature and severity of the disability, a Charter School can provide special education programs and services as determined by the IEP team, in locations such as: (1) the classroom/building the child would attend if not disabled, (2) an alternative regular class either in or outside the school, (3) a special education center operated by an IU, (4) an approved private school or other private facility licensed to serve children with disabilities, (5) a residential school, (6) approved out-of-state program, or (7) the home.

Special education services are provided according to the educational needs of the child, not the category of disability. Types of service that may be available, depending upon the child's disability and needs include, but are not limited to: (1) learning support; (2) life skills support; (3) emotional support; (4) deaf or hearing impaired support; (5) blind or visually impaired support; (6) physical support; (7) autistic support; (8) multiple disabilities support; (9) speech and language support; (10) extended school year support; and (11) vision support.

Related services are designed to enable the child to participate in or access his or her program of special education. Examples of related services that a child may require include but are not limited to: speech and language therapy, transportation, occupational therapy, physical therapy, school nursing services, audiology counseling services, parent counseling, or training, certain medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes, social work, recreation, and transition. Some students may also be eligible for extended school year services if determined needed by their IEP teams in accordance with Chapter 711 regulations.

The Charter School, in conjunction with the parents, determines the type and intensity of special education and related services that a particular child needs based on the unique program of special education and related services that the school develops for that child. The child's program is described in writing in an individualized education program, or "IEP," which is developed by an IEP team. The participants in the IEP team are dictated by IDEA 2004. The parents of the child have the right to be notified of and to be offered participation in all meetings of their child's IEP team. The IEP is revised as often as circumstances warrant but reviewed at least annually. The law requires that the program and placement of the child, as described in the IEP, be reasonably calculated to ensure meaningful educational benefit to the student. In accordance with IDEA 2004, there may be situations in which a Charter School may hold an IEP team meeting if the parents refuse or fail to attend the IEP team meeting.

IEPs generally contain: (1) a statement of the student's present levels; (2) a statement of measurable annual goals established for the child; (3) a statement of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and when periodic reports will be provided; (4) a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided, if any; (5) an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the

regular class and in activities; (6) a statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the performance of the child on State and school assessments; and (7) the projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications and the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those services or modifications.

Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 14, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually, thereafter, the IEP must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals and transition services needed to assist in reaching those goals. The Charter School must invite the child to the IEP team meeting at which the transition plan is developed.

Beginning not later than one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, the IEP must include a statement that the child has been informed of the child's rights, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority.

### **Screening and Evaluation Procedures for Children to Determine Eligibility** **Screening**

The Charter School has established a system of screening which may include prereferral intervention services to accomplish the following:

- (1) Identification and provision of initial screening for students prior to referral for a special education evaluation.
- (2) Provision of peer support for teachers and other staff members to assist them in working effectively with students in the general education curriculum.
- (3) Identification of students who may need special education services and programs.

The screening process includes:

Hearing and vision screening in accordance with Section 1402 of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P. S. § 14-1402) for the purpose of identifying students with hearing or vision difficulty so that they can be referred for assistance or recommended for evaluation for special education.

Screening at reasonable intervals to determine whether all students are performing based on grade-appropriate standards in core academic subjects.

The Charter School has established and implements procedures to locate, identify and evaluate children suspected of being eligible for special education. These procedures involve screening activities which may also include but are not limited to: review of data and student records; motor screening; and speech and language screening. The school assesses the current achievement and performance of the child, designs school-based interventions, and assesses the effectiveness of interventions. If the concern can be addressed without special education services, or is the result of limited English proficiency or appropriate instruction, a recommendation may be made

for interventions other than a multidisciplinary team evaluation. Parents have the right to request a multidisciplinary team evaluation at any time, regardless of the outcome of the screening process.

In accordance with Chapter 711, in the event that the Charter School would meet the criteria in 34 CFR 300.646(b)(2) (relating to disproportionality), as established by the State Department of Education, the services that would be required would then include:

- (1) A verification that the student was provided with appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction (as defined in section 1208(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (20 U.S.C.A. § 6368(3)), and appropriate instruction in math.
- (2) For students with academic concerns, an assessment of the student's performance in relation to State-approved grade level standards.
- (3) For students with behavioral concerns, a systematic observation of the student's behavior in the school environment where the student is displaying difficulty.
- (4) A research-based intervention to increase the student's rate of learning or behavior change based on the results of the assessments under paragraph (2) or (3), or both.
- (5) Repeated assessments of achievement or behavior, or both, conducted at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal monitoring of student progress during the interventions.
- (6) A determination as to whether the student's assessed difficulties are the result of a lack of instruction or limited English proficiency.
- (7) A determination as to whether the student's needs exceed the functional ability of the regular education program to maintain the student at an appropriate instructional level.
- (8) Documentation that information about the student's progress as identified in paragraph (5) was periodically provided to the student's parents.

Except as indicated above or otherwise announced publicly, screening activities take place on-going at periods throughout the school year. Screening is conducted at the Charter School, unless other arrangements are necessary or arranged.

The screening of a student by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation is not to be considered an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services.

**If parents need additional information regarding the purpose, time, and location of screening activities, they should call or write the Principal of the Charter School at:**

**Dogwood Charter School  
P. O. Box 13394  
Pittsburgh, PA 15243**

**Screening or pre referral intervention activities may not serve as a bar to the right of a parent to request an evaluation, at any time, including prior to or during the conduct of screening or pre referral intervention activities.**

## **Evaluation**

An evaluation under IDEA 2004 involves the use of a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child, including information provided by the parent that may assist in determining whether the child is a child with a disability and the content of the child's IEP. The Charter School does not use any single measure or assessment as a sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child. Technically sound instruments are used to assess the relative contribution of cognitive and behavioral factors in addition to physical or developmental factors.

Parental consent must be obtained by the Charter School prior to conducting an initial evaluation to determine if the child qualifies as a child with a disability, and before providing special education and related services to the child. Parental consent for an evaluation shall not be construed as consent for their child to receive special education and related services. The screening of a child by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation is not considered to be an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services; therefore, parental consent is not required in this instance.

The law contains additional provisions and due process protections regarding situations in which parental consent for an initial evaluation is absent or refused discussed more fully below and in the PaTTAN Procedural Safeguards Notice. If you have any questions about where to obtain a copy of the PaTTAN Procedural Safeguards Notice, kindly contact the school's Principal at

The evaluation process is conducted by a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) which includes a teacher, other qualified professionals who work with the child, the parents and other members as required by law. The MDE process must be conducted in accordance with specific timelines and must include protective procedures. For example, tests and procedures used as part of the Multidisciplinary Evaluation may not be racially or culturally biased.

The MDE process culminates with a written report called an Evaluation Report (ER). This report makes recommendations about a student's eligibility for special education based on the presence of a disability and the need for specially designed instruction.

Parents who think their child is eligible for special education may request, at any time, that the Charter School conduct a Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation. **Requests for a**



**Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation must be made in writing to the Principal of the Charter School at P. O. Box 13394, Pittsburgh, PA 15243.**

If a parent makes an oral request for a Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation, the Charter School shall provide the parent with a form(s) for that purpose. If the public school denies the parents' request for an evaluation, the parents have the right to challenge the denial through an impartial hearing or through voluntary alternative dispute resolution such as mediation.

Reevaluations are conducted if the Charter School determines that the educational or related services needs, including improved academic achievement and functional performance, of the child warrant a reevaluation; or if the child's parent or teacher requests a reevaluation. A reevaluation may occur not more than once a year, unless the parent and the Charter School agree; and must occur once every 3 years, unless the parent and the Charter School agree that a reevaluation is unnecessary. Students with intellectual disability must be reevaluated every two years under State law.

**Educational Placement**

The determination of whether a student is eligible for special education is made by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. The IEP team includes: the parents of a child with a disability; not less than one regular education teacher, if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment; not less than one special education teacher, or when appropriate, not less than one special education provider; a representative of the school who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities, is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum, and is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the Charter School; an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, who may be a member of the team described above; other individuals, at the discretion of the parent or the agency, who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate; and whenever appropriate, a child with a disability. IEP team participation is directly addressed by the regulations. If the student is determined to be eligible for special education, the IEP team develops a written education plan called an IEP. The IEP shall be based in part on the results of the Multidisciplinary Evaluation. When the IEP team decides that a student is not eligible for special education, recommendations for educational programming in regular education may be developed from the ER.

Placement must be made in the "least restrictive environment", as described more fully above, in which the student's needs can be met with special education and related services. All students with disabilities must be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with children who are not disabled.

## **Parents and Surrogate Parents**

For purposes of this Notice, the Charter School considers parents to be biological or adoptive parents of a child; a foster parent; a guardian generally authorized to act as the child's parent, or authorized to make educational decisions for the child; an individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative) with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child's welfare; or a surrogate parent.

A surrogate parent must be appointed when no parent can be identified; a public agency, after reasonable efforts, cannot locate a parent; the child is a ward of the State under the laws of Pennsylvania, or the child is an unaccompanied homeless youth as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 11434a(6). A person selected as a surrogate parent must not be an employee of the SEA, the Charter School or any other agency that is involved in the education or care of the child; has no personal or professional interest that conflicts with the interest of the child the surrogate parent represents; and has knowledge and skills that ensure adequate representation of the child. The surrogate parent may represent the child in all matters relating to the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of FAPE to the child. Reasonable efforts must be made to ensure the assignment of a surrogate parent not more than 30 days after it is determined that the child needs a surrogate parent.

## **Prior Written Notice**

The Charter School will notify the parent whenever the Charter School:

- a. Proposes to initiate or to change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to the child; or
- b. Refuses to initiate or to change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of your child, or the provision of FAPE to the child.
- c. Change of placement for disciplinary reasons.
- d. Due process hearing, or an expedited due process hearing, initiated by the Charter School.
- e. Refusal of the Charter School to agree to an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at public expense.

In Pennsylvania, prior written notice is provided by means of a Prior Written Notice Form/Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP). You should be given reasonable notice of this proposal or refusal so that if you do not agree with the Charter School you may take appropriate action. Reasonable Notice means ten days.

### **The prior written notice must:**

Describe the action that the Charter School proposes or refuses to take;

1. Explain why the Charter School is proposing or refusing to take the action;
2. Describe each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the Charter School used in deciding to propose or refuse the action;
3. Include a statement that you have protections under the procedural safeguards provisions in Part B of IDEA;
4. Tell how you can obtain a description of the procedural safeguards if the action that the Charter School is proposing or refusing is not an initial referral for evaluation;
5. Include resources for you to contact for help in understanding Part B of the IDEA;
6. Describe any other choices that your child's IEP Team considered and the reasons why those choices were rejected; and
7. Provide a description of other reasons why the Charter School proposed or refused the action.

The notice must be:

- 1) Written in language understandable to the general public; and
- 2) Provided in your native language or other mode of communication you use, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.
- 3) If your native language or other mode of communication is not a written language, the Charter School will ensure that:
  - a) The notice is translated for you orally or by other means in your native language or other mode of communication;
  - b) You understand the content of the notice; and
  - c) There is written evidence that 1 and 2 have been met.

*Native language*, when used with an individual who has limited English proficiency, means the following:

- a. The language normally used by that person, or, in the case of a child, the language normally used by the child's parents;
- b. In all direct contact with a child (including evaluation of a child), the language normally used by the child in the home or learning environment.

For a person with deafness or blindness, or for a person with no written language, the mode of communication is what the person normally uses (such as sign language, Braille, or oral communication).

### **Parental Consent**

*Consent* means:

- a. You have been fully informed in your native language or other mode of communication (such as sign language, Braille, or oral communication) of all information about the action for which consent is sought;
- b. You understand and agree in writing to that action, and the consent describes that action and lists the records (if any) that will be released and to whom; and
- c. You understand that the consent does not negate (undo) an action that

has occurred after you gave your consent and before you withdrew it.

### **Need for Parental Consent**

#### **1. Initial Evaluations (34 CFR §300.300)**

##### **a. General Rule: Consent for initial evaluation**

The Charter School cannot conduct an initial evaluation of your child to determine whether your child is eligible under Part B of the IDEA to receive special education and related services without first providing you with prior written notice of the proposed action and without obtaining your consent. The Charter School must make reasonable efforts to obtain your informed consent for an initial evaluation to decide whether your child is a child with a disability. Your consent for initial evaluation does not mean that you have also given your consent for the Charter School to start providing special education and related services to your child. If your child is enrolled in public school or you are seeking to enroll your child in a public school and you have refused to provide consent or failed to respond to a request to provide consent for an initial evaluation, the Charter School may, but is not required to, seek to conduct an initial evaluation of your child by utilizing the Act's mediation or due process complaint, resolution meeting, and impartial due process hearing procedures. The Charter School will not violate its obligations to locate, identify and evaluate your child if it does not pursue an evaluation of your child in these circumstances.

##### **b. Special rules for initial evaluation of wards of the State**

Under Pennsylvania law, if a child is designated a ward of the state, the whereabouts of the parent are not known or the rights of the parent have been terminated in accordance with State law. Therefore, someone other than the parent has been designated to make educational decisions for the child. Consent for an initial evaluation should, therefore, be obtained from the individual so designated.

*Ward of the State*, as used in the IDEA, encompasses two other categories, so as to include a child who is:

1. A foster child who does not have a foster parent;
2. Considered a ward of the State under State law; **or**
3. In the custody of a public child welfare agency.

#### **2. Consent for Initial Placement in Special Education (34 CFR §300.300)**

Definitions of Parental Consent:

##### **1. Consent Means:**

- a. You have been fully informed in your native language or other mode of communication (such as sign language, Braille, or oral communication) of all information about the action for which consent is sought;
- b. You understand and agree in writing to that action, and the consent describes that action and lists the records (if any) that will be released and to whom; **and**
- c. You understand that the consent does not negate (undo) an action that

- has occurred after you gave your consent and before you withdrew it.
2. Can the Parent Revoke Consent?
- Yes. You must submit written documentation to the staff revoking consent for special education and related services;
  - When you revoke consent for special education and related services, the Charter School must provide you with Prior Written Notice;
  - Special education and related services cannot cease until the Charter School provides you with Prior Written Notice;
  - Prior notice is defined as ten calendar days;
  - Charter School staff cannot use mediation or due process to override your revocation of consent;
  - The Charter School will not be considered in violation of the requirement to make FAPE available to the child because of the failure to provide the child with further special education and related services;
  - The Charter School is not required to amend the child's educational records to remove any references to the child's receipt of special education and related services because of the revocation of consent; and
  - The Charter School is not required to convene an IEP team meeting or develop an IEP for the child for further provision of special education and related services.

#### *Parental consent for services*

The Charter School must obtain your informed consent before providing special education and related services to your child for the first time. The Charter School must make reasonable efforts to obtain your informed consent before providing special education and related services to your child for the first time.

If you do not respond to a request to provide your consent for your child to receive special education and related services for the first time, or if you refuse to give such consent, the Charter School may not use the procedural safeguards (i.e. mediation, due process complaint, resolution meeting, or an impartial due process hearing) in order to obtain agreement or a ruling that the special education and related services as recommended by your child's IEP Team may be provided to your child without your consent.

If you refuse to give your consent for your child to start receiving special education and related services, or if you do not respond to a request to provide such consent and the Charter School does not provide your child with the special education and related services for which it sought your consent, the Charter School:

- Is not in violation of the requirement to make FAPE available to your child for its failure to provide those services to your child; **and**
- Is not required to have an IEP meeting or develop an IEP for your child for the special education and related services for which your consent was requested.

**3. Consent for Reevaluations (34 CFR §300.300)**

*The Charter School must obtain your informed consent before it reevaluates your child, unless the Charter School can demonstrate that:*

1. It took reasonable steps to obtain your consent for your child's reevaluation; **and**
2. You did not respond.

**4. Documentation of Reasonable Efforts to Obtain Parental Consent (34 CFR §300.300)**

The Charter School must maintain documentation of reasonable efforts to obtain parental consent for initial evaluations, to provide special education and related services for the first time, to reevaluate and to locate parents of wards of the State for initial evaluations. The documentation must include a record of the Charter School's attempts in these areas, such as:

1. Detailed records of telephone calls made or attempted and the results of those calls;
2. Copies of correspondence sent to the parents and any responses received; **and**
3. Detailed records of visits made to the parent's home or place of employment and the results of those visits.

**5. Consent Not Required Related to Evaluation**

**Your consent is not required before the Charter School may:**

1. Review existing data as part of your child's evaluation or a reevaluation; **or**
2. Give your child a test or other evaluation that is given to all children unless, before that test or evaluation, consent is required from all parents of all children.

**6. Refused Consent to a Reevaluation**

If you refuse to consent to your child's reevaluation, the Charter School may, but is not required to, pursue your child's reevaluation by using the mediation, due process complaint, resolution meeting, and impartial due process hearing procedures to seek to override your refusal to consent to your child's reevaluation. As with initial evaluations, the Charter School does not violate its obligations under Part B of the IDEA if it declines to pursue the reevaluation in this manner.

The Charter School may not use your refusal to consent to one service or activity to deny you or your child any other service, benefit, or activity.

**7. Disagreements with an Evaluation**

**a. Independent Educational Evaluations (34 CFR §300.502)**

**1) General**

As described below, you have the right to obtain an independent

educational evaluation (IEE) of your child if you disagree with the evaluation of your child that was obtained by the Charter School. If you request an IEE, the Charter School must provide you with information about where you may obtain an IEE and about the Charter School's criteria that apply to IEEs.

**2) Definitions**

- a) *Independent educational evaluation* means an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the Charter School responsible for the education of your child.
- b) *Public expense* means that the Charter School either pays for the full cost of the evaluation or ensures that the evaluation is otherwise provided at no cost to you, consistent with the provisions of Part B of the IDEA, which allow each State to use whatever State, local, Federal and private sources of support are available in the State to meet the requirements of Part B of the Act.

**3) Parent right to evaluation at public expense**

You have the right to an IEE of your child at public expense if you disagree with an evaluation of your child obtained by the Charter School, subject to the following conditions:

- a) If you request an IEE of your child at public expense, the Charter School must, without unnecessary delay, either: (a) File a due process complaint to request a hearing to show that its evaluation of your child is appropriate; or (b) Provide an IEE at public expense, unless the Charter School demonstrates in a hearing that the evaluation of your child that you obtained did not meet the Charter School's criteria.
- b) If the Charter School requests a hearing and the final decision is that the Charter School's evaluation of your child is appropriate, you still have the right to an IEE, but not at public expense.
- c) If you request an IEE of your child, the Charter School may ask why you object to the evaluation of your child obtained by the Charter School. However, the Charter School may not require an explanation and may not unreasonably delay either providing the IEE of your child at public expense or filing a due process complaint to request a due process hearing to defend the Charter School's evaluation of your child.
- d) You are entitled to only one IEE of your child at public expense each time the Charter School conducts an evaluation of your child with which you disagree.
- e) Charter School criteria  
If an IEE is at public expense, the criteria under which the evaluation is obtained, including the location of the

evaluation and the qualifications of the examiner, must be the same as the criteria that the Charter School uses when it initiates an evaluation (to the extent those criteria are consistent with your right to an IEE).

Except for the criteria described above, a Charter School may not impose conditions or timelines related to obtaining an IEE at public expense.

**b. Parent-initiated evaluations**

If you obtain an IEE of your child at public expense or you share with the Charter School an evaluation of your child that you obtained at private expense:

- 1) The Charter School must consider the results of the evaluation of your child, if it meets the Charter School's criteria for IEEs, in any decision made with respect to the provision of FAPE to your child; **and**
- 2) You or the Charter School may present the evaluation as evidence at a due process hearing regarding your child.

**c. Requests for evaluations by hearing officers**

If a hearing officer requests an IEE of your child as part of a due process hearing, the cost of the evaluation must be at public expense.

**ANNUAL NOTICE OF RIGHTS REGARDING STUDENT RECORDS:**

**CONSENT FOR DISCLOSURE OF PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION (34 CFR §300.622)**

Unless the information is contained in education records, and the disclosure is authorized without parental consent under FERPA, your consent must be obtained before personally identifiable information is disclosed to parties other than officials of participating agencies. Except under the circumstances specified below, your consent is not required before personally identifiable information is released to officials of participating agencies for purposes of meeting a requirement of Part B of the IDEA.

Your consent, or consent of an eligible child who has reached the age of majority under State law, must be obtained before personally identifiable information is released to officials of participating agencies providing or paying for transition services.

**ACCESS TO CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION RELATED TO STUDENT (34 CFR §300.611)**

**1. Related to the confidentiality of information, the following definitions apply:**

- a. *Destruction* means physical destruction or removal of personal identifiers from information so that the information is no longer personally



identifiable.

- b. *Education records* means the type of records covered under the definition of “education records” in 34 CFR Part 99 (the regulations implementing the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. 1232g (FERPA)).
- c. *Participating agency* means any Charter School, agency or institution that collects, maintains, or uses personally identifiable information, or from which information is obtained, under Part B of the IDEA.
- d. **Personally identifiable (34 CFR §300.32)** means information that has:
  - 1) Your child’s name, your name as the parent, or the name of another family member;
  - 2) Your child’s address;
  - 3) A personal identifier, such as your child’s social security number or student number; **or**
  - 4) A list of personal characteristics or other information that would make it possible to identify your child with reasonable certainty.

## **2. Access Rights (34 CFR §300.613)**

### **a. Parent Access**

The Charter School must permit you to inspect and review any education records relating to your child that are collected, maintained, or used by the Charter School under Part B of the IDEA. The Charter School must comply with your request to inspect and review any education records on your child without unnecessary delay or before any meeting regarding an IEP, or any impartial due process hearing (including a resolution meeting or a hearing regarding discipline), and in no case more than 45 calendar days after you have made a request.

- 1) Your right to inspect and review education records includes:
- 2) Your right to a response from the Charter School to your reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records;
- 3) Your right to request that the Charter School provide copies of the records if you cannot effectively inspect and review the records unless you receive those copies; **and**
- 4) Your right to have your representative inspect and review the records.
  - a) The Charter School may presume that you have authority to inspect and review records relating to your child unless advised that you do not have the authority under applicable State law governing such matters as guardianship, or separation and divorce.
  - b) If any education **record includes information on more than one child**, the parents of those children have the right to inspect and review only the information relating to their child or to be informed of that specific information.
  - c) On request, each Charter School must provide you with a **list of the types and locations of education records**

collected, maintained, or used by the Charter School.

**b. Other Authorized Access (34 CFR §300.614)**

The Charter School must keep a record of parties obtaining access to education records collected, maintained, or used under Part B of the IDEA (except access by parents and authorized employees of the participating agency), including the name of the party, the date access was given, and the purpose for which the party is authorized to use the records.

**3. Fees**

The Charter School may charge a fee or copies of records (34 CFR §300.617) that are made for you under Part B of the IDEA, if the fee does not effectively prevent you from exercising your right to inspect and review those records. The Charter School may not charge a fee to search for or to retrieve information under Part B of the IDEA.

**4. Amendment of Records at Parent's Request (34 CFR §300.618)**

If you believe that information in the education records regarding your child collected, maintained, or used under Part B of the IDEA is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the privacy or other rights of your child, you may request the Charter School that maintains the information to change the information. The Charter School must decide whether to change the information in accordance with your request within a reasonable period of time of receipt of your request.

If the Charter School refuses to change the information in accordance with your request, it must inform you of the refusal and advise you of the right to a hearing for this purpose.

**5. Opportunity for a Records Hearing (34 CFR §300.619)**

The Charter School must, on request, provide you an opportunity for a hearing to challenge information in education records regarding your child to ensure that it is not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of your child.

**a. Hearing Procedures (34 CFR §300.621)**

A hearing to challenge information in education records must be conducted according to the following procedures for such hearings under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. Section 1233g (FERPA):

- 1) The educational agency or institution shall hold the hearing within a reasonable time after it has received the request for the hearing from the parent or eligible student.
- 2) The educational agency or institution shall give the parent or eligible student notice of the date, time, and place, reasonable in advance of the hearing.
- 3) The hearing may be conducted by any individual, including an official of the educational agency or institution who does not have a direct interest in the outcome of the hearing.
- 4) The educational agency or institution shall give the parent or eligible student a full and fair opportunity to present evidence to challenge the content of the student's education records on the

grounds that the information contained in the education records is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the privacy rights of the student. The parent or eligible student may, at their own expense, be assisted or represented by one or more individuals of his or her own choice, including an attorney.

- 5) The educational agency or institution shall make its decision in writing within a reasonable period of time after the hearing.
- 6) The decision must be based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing, and must include a summary of the evidence and the reasons for the decision.

**b. Result of Hearing (34 CFR §300.620)**

If, as a result of the hearing, the Charter School decides that the information is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the child, it must change the information accordingly and inform you in writing. If, as a result of the hearing, the Charter School decides that the information is not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of your child, you may place in the records that it maintains on your child a statement commenting on the information or providing any reasons you disagree with the decision of the participating agency.

Such an explanation placed in the records of your child must:

1. Be maintained by the Charter School as part of the records of your child as long as the record or contested portion is maintained by the participating agency; **and**
2. If the Charter School discloses the records of your child or the challenged portion to any party, the explanation must also be disclosed to that party.

**c. Safeguards (34 CFR §300.623)**

**Each Charter School must protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information at collection, storage, disclosure, and destruction stages.**

One official at each Charter School must assume responsibility for ensuring the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information. All persons collecting or using personally identifiable information must receive training or instruction regarding your State's policies and procedures regarding confidentiality under Part B of the IDEA and FERPA. Each Charter School must maintain, for public inspection, a current listing of the names and positions of those employees within the agency who have access to personally identifiable information.

**6. Destruction of Information (34 CFR §300.624)**

**The Charter School must inform you when personally identifiable information collected, maintained, or used is no longer needed to provide educational services to your child, and the information must be destroyed at your request.**

However, a permanent record of your child's name, address, and phone number, his or her grades, attendance record, classes attended, grade level completed,

and year completed may be maintained without time limitation.

## **PROCEDURES FOR DISCIPLINARY EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES.**

There are special rules in Pennsylvania for excluding children with disabilities for disciplinary reasons:

### **AUTHORITY OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL (34 CFR §300.530)**

#### **1. Case-by-case determination**

School personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis, when determining whether a change of placement, made in accordance with the following requirements related to discipline, is appropriate for a child with a disability who violates a school code of student conduct.

#### **2. General**

To the extent that they also take such action for children without disabilities, school personnel may, for not more than **10 consecutive school days**, remove a child with a disability (other than a child with intellectual disability) who violates a code of student conduct from his or her current placement to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting, another setting, or suspension. School personnel may also impose additional removals of the child of not more than **10 consecutive school days** in that same school year for separate incidents of misconduct, as long as those removals do not constitute a change of placement (see ***Change of Placement Because of Disciplinary Removals*** for the definition, below) or exceed 15 cumulative school days in a school year. Once a child with a disability has been removed from his or her current placement for a total of **10 school days** in the same school year, the Charter School must, during any subsequent days of removal in that school year, provide services to the extent required below under the sub-heading **Services**.

#### **3. Additional authority**

If the behavior that violated the student code of conduct was not a manifestation of the child's disability (see ***Manifestation determination***, below) and the disciplinary change of placement would exceed **10 consecutive school days**, school personnel may apply the disciplinary procedures to that child with a disability in the same manner and for the same duration as it would to children without disabilities, except that the school must provide services to that child as described below under **Services**. The child's IEP Team determines the interim alternative educational setting for such services. Under PA special education regulations, a disciplinary exclusion of a student with a disability for more than 15 cumulative school days in a school year will be considered a pattern so as to be deemed a change in educational placement (explained under **Change of Placement Because of Disciplinary Removals**). The Charter School is required to issue a NOREP/Prior Written Notice to parents prior to a removal that constitutes a change in placement (removal for more than 10 consecutive days or 15 cumulative days).

#### **4. Services**

The services that must be provided to a child with a disability who has been

removed from the child's current placement may be provided to an interim alternative educational setting. A Charter School is only required to provide services to a child with a disability who has been removed from his or her current placement for **10 school days or less** in that school year, if it provides services to a child without disabilities who has been similarly removed. Students may have the responsibility to make up exams and work missed while being disciplined by suspension and may be permitted to complete these assignments within guidelines established by their Charter School.

A child with a disability who is removed from the child's current placement for **more than 10 consecutive school days** must:

- a. Continue to receive educational services, so as to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP; **and**
- b. Receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment, and behavioral intervention services and modifications that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not happen again.

After a child with a disability has been removed from his or her current placement for **10 school days** during one school year, or **if** current removal is for **10 consecutive school days** or less, **and** if the removal is not a change of placement (see definition below), **then** school personnel, in consultation with at least one of the child's teachers, determine the extent to which services are needed to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP.

If the removal is a change of placement (see definition below), the child's IEP Team determines the appropriate services to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP.

#### **5. Manifestation determination**

**Within 10 school days of any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct (except for a removal that does not constitute a change in educational placement i.e., is for 10 consecutive school days or less and not a change of placement), the Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP Team (as determined by the parent and the Charter School) must review all relevant information in the student's file, including the child's IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents to determine:**

- a. If the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability; **or**
- b. If the conduct in question was the direct result of the Charter School's

failure to implement the child's IEP.

If the Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the child's IEP Team determine that either of those conditions was met, the conduct must be determined to be a manifestation of the child's disability.

If the Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the child's IEP Team determine that the conduct in question was the direct result of the Charter School's failure to implement the IEP, the Charter School must take immediate action to remedy those deficiencies.

**6. Determination that behavior was a manifestation of the child's disability**

If the Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP Team determine that the conduct was a manifestation of the child's disability, the IEP Team must either:

- a. Conduct a functional behavioral assessment, unless the Charter School had conducted a functional behavioral assessment before the behavior that resulted in the change of placement occurred, and implement a behavioral intervention plan for the child; or
- b. If a behavioral intervention plan has already been developed, review the behavioral intervention plan, and modify it, as necessary, to address the behavior.

Except as described below under the sub-heading **Special circumstances**, the Charter School must return the child to the placement from which the child was removed, unless the parent and the school agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the behavioral intervention plan.

**7. Special circumstances**

Whether or not the behavior was a manifestation of the child's disability, school personnel may remove a student to an interim alternative educational setting (determined by the child's IEP Team) for up to 45 school days, if the child:

- a. Carries a weapon (see the **Definitions** below) to school or has a weapon at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the Charter School;
- b. Knowingly has or uses illegal drugs (see the **Definitions** below), or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance, (see the **Definitions** below), while at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the Charter School; or
- c. Has inflicted serious bodily injury (see the **Definitions** below) upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the State Educational Agency or a Charter School.

**8. Definitions**

- a. *Controlled substance* means a drug or other substance identified under schedules I, II, III, IV, or V in section 202 (c) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 812(c)).
- b. *Illegal drug* means a controlled substance; but does not include a controlled substance that is legally possessed or used under the supervision of a licensed health-care professional or that is legally possessed or used under any other authority under that Act or under any

other provision of Federal law.

- c. *Serious bodily* injury has the meaning given the term “serious bodily injury” under paragraph (3) of subsection (h) of section 1365 of title 18, United States Code.
- d. *Weapon* has the meaning given the term “dangerous weapon” under paragraph (2) of the first subsection (g) of section 930 of title 18, United States Code.

#### **9. Notification**

On the date it makes the decision to make a removal that is a change of placement of the child because of a violation of a code of student conduct, the Charter School must notify the parents of that decision, and provide the parents with a procedural safeguards notice.

### **Change of Placement Because Of Disciplinary Removals (34 CFR §300.536)**

A removal of a child with a disability from the child’s current educational placement is a **change of placement** requiring a NOREP/prior written notice if:

- 1. The removal is for more than 10 consecutive school days; **or**
- 2. The removal is for 15 cumulative school days total in any one school year;
- 3. The child has been subjected to a series of removals that constitute a pattern because:
  - a. The series of removals total more than 10 school days in a school year;
  - b. The child’s behavior is substantially similar to the child’s behavior in previous incidents that resulted in a series of removals;
  - c. Of such additional factors as the length of each removal, the total amount of time the child has been removed, and the proximity of the removals to one another

Whether a pattern of removals constitutes a change of placement is determined on a case-by-case basis by the Charter School and, if challenged, is subject to review through due process and judicial proceedings.

### **Determination of Setting (34 CFR §300.531)**

The IEP must determine the interim alternative educational setting for removals that are **changes of placement**, and removals under the headings ***Additional authority*** and ***Special circumstances***, above.

#### **1. General**

The parent of a child with a disability may file a due process complaint (see above) to request a due process hearing if he or she disagrees with:

- a. Any decision regarding placement made under these discipline provisions; **or**
- b. The manifestation determination described above.

The Charter School may file a due process complaint (see above) to request a due process hearing if it believes that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others.

## 2. Authority of hearing officer

A hearing officer that meets the requirements described under the sub-heading ***Impartial Hearing Officer*** must conduct the due process hearing and make a decision. The hearing officer may:

- a. Return the child with a disability to the placement from which the child was removed if the hearing officer determines that the removal was a violation of the requirements described under the heading Authority of School Personnel, or that the child's behavior was a manifestation of the child's disability; or
- b. Order a change of placement of the child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 school days if the hearing officer determines that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others.

These hearing procedures may be repeated, if the Charter School believes that returning the child to the original placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others.

Whenever a parent or a Charter School files a due process complaint to request such a hearing, a hearing must be held that meets the requirements described under the headings ***Due Process Complaint Procedures, Hearings on Due Process Complaints***, except as follows:

1. The SEA must arrange for an expedited due process hearing, which must occur within **20** school days of the date the hearing is filed and must result in a determination within **10** school days after the hearing.
2. Unless the parents and the Charter School agree in writing to waive the meeting, or agree to use mediation, a resolution meeting must occur within **7** calendar days of receiving notice of the due process complaint. The hearing may proceed unless the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of both parties within **15** calendar days of receipt of the due process complaint.

A party may appeal the decision in an expedited due process hearing in the same way as they may for decisions in other due process hearings.

When, as described above, the parent or Charter School has filed a due process complaint related to disciplinary matters, the child must (unless the parent and the State Educational Agency or Charter School agree otherwise) remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer, or until the expiration of the time period of removal as provided for and described under the heading ***Authority of School Personnel***, whichever occurs first.

### **Special Rules for Students with intellectual disability**

The disciplinary removal of a child with intellectual disability attending either a Charter School for any amount of time is considered a change in placement and requires NOREP/prior written notice (if the disciplinary event does not involve drugs, weapons and/or serious bodily injury). A removal from school is not a change in placement for a child who is identified with intellectual disability when the disciplinary event involves weapons, drugs, and/or serious bodily injury.



According to certain assurances the Commonwealth entered into related to the PARC consent decree, a Charter School may suspend on a limited basis a student with intellectual disability who presents a danger to himself or others upon application and approval by the Bureau of Special Education and only to the extent that a student with a disability other than intellectual disability could be suspended.

**Protections for Children Not Yet Eligible For Special Education and Related Services (34 Cfr §300.534)**

**1. General**

If a child has not been determined eligible for special education and related code of student conduct, but the Charter School had knowledge (as determined below) before the behavior that brought about the disciplinary action occurred, that the child was a child with a disability, then the child may assert any of the protections described in this notice.

**2. Basis of knowledge for disciplinary matters**

**A Charter School must be deemed to have knowledge that a child is a child with a disability if, before the behavior that brought about the disciplinary action occurred:**

- a. The parent of the child expressed concern in writing that the child is in need of special education and related services to supervisory or administrative personnel of appropriate educational agency, or a teacher of the child;
- b. The parent requested an evaluation related to eligibility for special education and related services under Part B of the IDEA; **or**
- c. The child's teacher or other Charter School personnel expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the child directly to the Charter School's director of special education or to other supervisory personnel of the Charter School.

**3. Exception**

**A Charter School would not be deemed to have such knowledge if:**

- a. The child's parent has not allowed an evaluation of the child or refused special education services; **or**
- b. The child has been evaluated and determined to not be a child with a disability under Part B of the IDEA.

**4. Conditions that apply if there is no basis of knowledge**

If prior to taking disciplinary measures against the child, a Charter School does not have knowledge that a child is a child with a disability, as described above under the sub-headings ***Basis of knowledge for disciplinary matters*** and ***Exception***, the child may be subjected to the disciplinary measures that are applied to children without disabilities who engaged in comparable behaviors. However, if a request is made for an evaluation of a child during the time period in which the child is subjected to disciplinary measures, the evaluation must be conducted in an expedited manner.

Until the evaluation is completed, the child remains in the educational placement determined by school authorities, which can include suspension or expulsion

without educational services. If the child is determined to be a child with a disability, taking into consideration information from the evaluation conducted by the Charter School, and information provided by the parents, the Charter School must provide special education and related services in accordance with Part B of the IDEA, including the disciplinary requirements described above.

**B. REFERRAL TO AND ACTION BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES (34 CFR §300.535)**

**1. The state and federal regulations do not:**

- a. Prohibit an agency from reporting a crime committed by a child with a disability to appropriate authorities; or
- b. Prevent State law enforcement and judicial authorities from exercising their responsibilities with regard to the application of Federal and State law to crimes committed by a child with a disability.

Subsequent to a referral to law enforcement, an updated functional behavior assessment and positive behavior support plan are required.

**2. Transmittal of records**

If a Charter School reports a crime committed by a child with a disability, the Charter School: must ensure that copies of the child's special education and disciplinary records are transmitted for consideration by the authorities to whom the agency reports the crime; and May transmit copies of the child's special education and disciplinary records only to the extent permitted by FERPA.

**THIS ANNUAL NOTICE AND STATEMENT OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH CHAPTER 711 OF TITLE 22 OF THE PA CODE AND INCORPORATED INFORMATION FROM APPLICABLE PDE AND STATE FORMS AND SOURCES.**

**THE CONTENT OF THIS NOTICE HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN STRAIGHTFORWARD, SIMPLE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. IF A PERSON DOES NOT UNDERSTAND ANY OF THIS NOTICE, HE OR SHE SHOULD ASK THE PRINCIPAL OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL FOR AN EXPLANATION. THE CHARTER SCHOOL WILL ARRANGE FOR AN INTERPRETER FOR PARENTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY. IF A PARENT IS DEAF OR BLIND OR HAS NO WRITTEN LANGUAGE, THE SCHOOL WILL ARRANGE FOR COMMUNICATION OF THIS NOTICE IN THE MODE NORMALLY USED BY THE PARENT (E.G., SIGN LANGUAGE, BRAILLE, OR ORAL COMMUNICATION).**

**THIS NOTICE IS ONLY A SUMMARY OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES, EVALUATION AND SCREENING ACTIVITIES, AND RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS PERTAINING TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, CHILDREN THOUGHT TO BE DISABLED, AND THEIR PARENTS AND IS ONLY A SUMMARY OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY RIGHTS REGARDING STUDENT INFORMATION.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REQUEST EVALUATION OR SCREENING OF A CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENT CONTACT THE PRINCIPAL OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL AT THE CHARTER SCHOOL, P. O. Box 13394 Pittsburgh, PA 15243.**

**NOTHING IN THIS NOTICE IS INTENDED TO CONFLICT WITH OR SUPPLANT THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S CURRENT "PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS NOTICE" WHICH IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE SCHOOL FOR YOUR REVIEW OR WITH APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS.**

**Child Find**

Dogwood Charter School's Child Find Policy In accordance with Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code, the Executive Director or his/her designee shall ensure that children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, who are enrolled at the charter school and are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated. A practical method will be developed and implemented to determine which children with disabilities are currently receiving needed special education and related services. Child Find includes children who are suspected of having a disability under Section 300.8 of the federal regulations that implement IDEA 2004 and in need of special education, even though they are advancing from grade to grade. This is extended to highly mobile children, including migrant children, homeless youth and parentally placed private students, as appropriate.

**Activities**

The Executive Director or their designee shall ensure that the following outreach activities occur concerning programs and services for children with disabilities who attend:

1. Offer parents/guardians and family (including foster and surrogate parents) information regarding training activities and publicize the availability of such activities to all parents/guardians. Training in the areas of behavior support, response to intervention, inclusive practices, transition, assistive technology, autism, and interagency coordination, are important. Parents/Guardians may also be directed to PaTTAN training opportunities. Parent/Guardian input is to be sought to determine what parent/guardian training is needed/desired.
2. Provide access to interested health and mental health professionals, daycare providers, county agency personnel and other professionals, including: professionals and agencies who work with homeless and migrant or other highly mobile youth, wards of the state, as well as to students attending private schools (where applicable).
3. Provide information concerning the types of special education programs and services available in and through Dogwood Charter School. Further, Dogwood Charter School will provide information regarding the manner in which parents/guardians can request and access those services.
4. Provide or obtain periodic training for Dogwood Charter School's regular education staff and special education staff concerning the identification and evaluation of special needs. Further, provide a provision of special education programs and services available to students with disabilities.
5. A public outreach awareness system we will be utilized by Dogwood Charter School shall include methods for reaching homeless children, wards of the state,

children with disabilities attending private schools, and highly mobile children, including migrant children.

6. Dogwood Charter School shall conduct Child Find activities to inform the public of its special education services and programs and the manner in which to request them.
7. Dogwood Charter School's Child Find effort must include information regarding potential signs of developmental delays and other risk factors that could indicate disabilities.
8. Efforts must be made to identify enrolled students who have a native language other than English to ensure that notices and other outreach efforts are available to them in their native language. This is required by law.

### Screening

The Executive Director or their designee shall establish a system of screening in order to:

1. Identify and provide screening for students prior to referral for an initial special education multidisciplinary team evaluation.
2. Provide peer support for teachers and other staff members to assist them in working effectively with students using the general education curriculum.
3. Conduct hearing and vision screening in accordance with the Public School Code of 1949, for the purpose of identifying students with hearing or vision difficulty so that they can be referred for assistance or recommended for evaluation for special education, if necessary.
4. Identify students who may need special education services and programs.
5. Maintain the confidentiality of information in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations.
6. The pre-evaluation screening process shall include:
  - a) For students with academic concerns: an assessment of the student's functioning in the curriculum, including curriculum-based or performance-based assessments.
  - b) For students with behavioral concerns: a systematic observation of the student's behavior in the classroom or area in which the student is displaying difficulty ("FBA" or functional behavior assessment).
  - c) An intervention based on the results of the assessments conducted.
  - d) An assessment of the student's response to the intervention, if applicable.
  - e) A determination of whether or not the assessed difficulties of the student are the result of a lack of instruction or limited English proficiency.
  - f) A determination of whether or not the student's needs exceed the functional capacity of the regular education program, without special education programs and services, to maintain the student at an instructional level appropriate to the level and pace of instruction provided in that program.
  - g) Activities designed to gain the participation of parents/guardians.
  - h) Controls to ensure that if screening activities have produced little or no improvement within the specified timeframe after initiation, the student shall be referred for a multidisciplinary team evaluation.

The screening activities shall not serve as a bar to the right of a parent/guardian to request a multidisciplinary team evaluation at any time. When the completion of screening activities prior to referral for a multidisciplinary team evaluation will result in serious mental or physical harm, or significant educational regression, to the student or others, Dogwood Charter School may initiate a multidisciplinary team reevaluation without completion of the screening process in accordance with Chapter 711. Whenever an evaluation is conducted without a pre-evaluation screening, the activities described shall be completed as part of that evaluation whenever possible.

Students who have faced trauma, cope with Mental Health disorders and experience Executive Functioning Deficits (EFD) will be supported at Dogwood in 2 ways.

First, we will structure our school's systems, instruction, schedule, classes and physical building in ways that support the well-being of all our students.

We will create a "relaxed alertness" in the brain. If students are stressed, worried, scared, hurried or scattered, then the amygdala part of the brain freezes, and the logical side of the brain cannot function properly. So, we want our students to be in a relaxed state so that they can be alert to learn the most that they can.

Also, our practices boost serotonin and dopamine, which affects a student's mood and motivation.

Some of those practices intentionally focus on our school's atmosphere to create a sense of home and belonging:

- We are intentionally a small school with small class sizes.
- Our teachers will loop, meaning that they teach the same students for 2-4 years.
- Teachers will eat daily with their students.
- Students' success will be constantly recognized using the Nurtured Heart Approach - energizing the positive, not the negative, and using quick, unemotional resets to help students who behave poorly to reset and gain control to resume their greatness. They experience their positive selves.
- Teachers and students will daily use Restorative Practices and circles to build community to prevent bullying from occurring, but when it pops up, the community handles it and restores relationships.

Current research demonstrates how both of these approaches stimulate the amygdala in the brain, growing empathy and compassion. Thus, students become more empathetic and compassionate.

- Our school building is not institutional but beautiful and orderly, helping the brain to stay relaxed and positive.
- We have outdoor classrooms, and students spend time learning, eating, and playing outdoors. They go on nature walks. Thus, they boost their serotonin and dopamine levels.

- Phones are not allowed in classrooms, so they are not distracted, tempted, bullied, or bullying others.

Our primary method of instruction, which is experienced by all our students, also strongly supports mental health and motivates students with EFD:

- Interesting books and hands-on activities keep the mind highly engaged and thus attentive, which leads to student success.
- Students are taught to narrate, ask the questions and discuss ideas, so their ideas and their questions matter. They aren't interrogated by the teacher but taught to take risks.
- Student-led conferences and student-led portfolio assessments are driven by students, and they learn to be accountable for their own learning and experience adult support and accountability to live up to their potential!
- We don't have electives - - so art, Shakespeare, Spanish, Latin, physical education, sports, music, instrument lessons, nature study, and internships are REQUIRED. Thus, we are requiring all students to take risks and to experience success in areas they didn't know they could be successful in, which is an authentic self-esteem booster. It also requires them to use the right side of the brain and their physical body, so they are boosting dopamine and serotonin.

Dogwood will practice the following teaching and intervention strategies which will be used to assist students with disabilities, at risk students and ELL students:

- IEPs (SDIs, Progress Monitoring, AIMS Web, IEP team meetings)
- Title I services K-12 (small group remedial instruction)
- An appropriate reading intervention program will be implemented w/PD for Teachers
- Flexible Grouping in grade levels K-12 in math and reading
- Benchmarking predominately in math and reading to monitor progress and growth
- Special Reading and Math Block scheduling K-12
- Intentionally small class sizes
- Reading Buddies (older students reading to or listening to younger students reading)
- Pull-out classes with Special Ed Teachers
- Small Group and One-to-One Tutoring
- Khan's Academy
- English Language Learner Certified Teacher (IU)
- Self-Contained Classrooms for struggling students
- Individualized Learning Plans for all students
- Individualized schedules accommodating the individual needs of underperformers, ELL and IEP students
- Internship program for 11-12th graders
- Transitional Services for 14+ year olds w/IEPs
- ESY

Where student progress seems lacking in different areas, interim meetings are held with

parents to identify additional strategies as needed.

For screening, benchmark assessments will be used. When students do not meet expectations, teachers make special note, and data is collected and presented to the Director of Education. A child study is conducted.

For general education students who are struggling, the following steps are taken:

Upon request from either parent/guardian or school staff, immediate action is taken to assure compliance.

If the request is made by a parent/guardian, indicating a suspicion of the need for Special Education, a PTE is immediately issued, and the formal evaluation process begins. If either the parent/guardian or school staff express concerns for apparent lack of progress, a team is convened to review documented areas of concern and classroom efforts to address those concerns utilized to date.

In addition to the ideas listed above, ideas are generated for use by classroom teachers and school resource staff as appropriate, and the team reconvenes at a predetermined date to review and evaluate additional progress. Where these interventions prove successful, they are continued and updated as needed. Results are shared with parents.

Where inadequate improvement is noted, parents are further updated of the process, and a permission to evaluate is generated and offered for parent/guardian approval. Then the formal evaluation process continues. If the IEP team (including parent/guardian) determines that there is a disability and that Special Education intervention is required, an IEP is developed and NOREP/PWN is issued for parental approval and service.

DCS will contract to use ELL Itinerant services from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit to provide the necessary ELL instruction if needed.

Below are the steps taken and attached are the forms used by the ELL teacher.

- Identification - student tested by ELL director at AIU and recommendations for instruction developed
- Appropriate Daily ELL instruction will be provided
- As needed all teachers will know students level of ELD and appropriate accommodations – ELL materials indicating the students' levels will be shared in meeting with students' teachers and follow up meetings will be held to support teachers
- Required Annual Testing - The assessment will be given by the ESL teacher during the testing window.

English Language Learner Plan and Special Education Manual can be found in Appendix I

TO THE EXTENT THAT ANYTHING IN THIS POLICY COULD BE CONSTRUED TO CONFLICT WITH THE SCHOOL'S CHARTER OR APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS, THE APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS AND/OR CHARTER CONTROL SUPERSEDES THIS POLICY.

References: 20 USC 1401(3), 1412(a)(3); 34 CFR §300.111; 22 Pa. Code §711.21

### **I.3.C. The teaching methods to be used and how this pedagogy enhances student learning**

The following list of relational teaching methods includes an explanation of a method, a list of ways the method enhances student learning, and a list of studies and research about the particular method.

Further details and more research studies are found in Appendix A, "Instruction."

#### **1. Child's Mind and Innate Desire to Know**

*Student instruction matches the natural laws of learning, students feel respected and empowered and thus inwardly motivated to learn*

In a Relational Education, the children (and adults) are related to as persons with minds with vast potential, not automatons to be programmed or mammals needing reinforcements to learn behaviors. The mind is the instrument or tool of their learning. The great educational psychologists (Vygotsky, Piaget) support the idea that all children come with an innate intelligence. Children come with an innate ability to use language and their innate intellect (Vygotsky). Wells (1994) discusses the innate ability of children as well as the innate knowledge and intellect in groups. Senge (2006) sums it all up by saying that all humans love to learn.

The social interaction between the community of learners in narration and the oral discussion found in the grand conversation that students direct modifies the students' perspectives and impacts learning. They participate in the conversation because of their innate desire to know. This changes and impacts their learning of standards (Giorgis, 1999).

Students do not need outside motivators or programming to learn if their mind is engaged and delighted in the learning. Grades, prizes, punishment, and marks are not necessary and can actually be hindrances to the mind and desire to learn.

Research:

- "...responsive assisting interactions must become commonplace in the classroom. Minds must be roused to life" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

- "Ladson-Billings (1994) studied eight effective teachers of African American students; six of these taught in the upper elementary grades. She reports the following characteristics as typifying these successful teachers: See teaching as 'pulling knowledge out' versus putting it in and view knowledge critically, as continually



recreated and shared.

- Daniels, Harry. *An Introduction to Vygotsky*. Routledge. UK: 1996.
- Wells, G. (1994). *Changing schools from within: Creating communities of inquiry*. Toronto, Canada: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Furth, H. G. (1970). *Piaget for Teachers*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice- Hall, Inc.
- Adolphs, R. (2006). The social brain. *Engineering & Science No. 1* 13-19.
- Bakker, C., et al (2002). The social brain: A unifying foundation for Psychiatry. Editorial. *Academic Psychiatry* 26:3, Fall, 219.
- Giorgis, C. (1999). The power of reading picture books aloud to secondary students. *Clearing House*, 73, 51-53.

## 2. Relationships with Many Persons, Real Things and Ideas

*students know and CARE about what they know, increase student interest, build lifelong responsible and ethical living habits, make concepts real*

Minds of social beings are roused through relationships with others, with real things, and with concepts. Thus, learning requires “mind meeting mind,” and memorable experiences and relationships, not the memorization of facts. Students will meet minds in whole books, in biographies, in art, and in the community through field studies, internships, and service projects.

Research:

- Learning is constructed socially and linguistically, not reproduced based on teacher and text input (Vygotsky, 1993)
- Social studies should involve students in both independent inquiry and cooperative learning to build skills and habits needed for lifelong, responsible living; and social studies should explore a full variety of the cultures found in America, including students' own backgrounds and understandings of other cultures' approaches to various social studies concepts (Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde, 1998)
- To make real concepts being taught, social studies must involve students in active participation in the classroom and the wider community (Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde, 1998).
- "Science study should involve doing science, that is, questioning and discovering- not just covering- material" (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.111).

## 3. Facilitating Teachers

*learning is not dispensed to students, students learn for themselves, teachers monitor what students do and do not know and then scaffold the learning, thus enhancing student performance*

Standards are learned when students are actively engaged. Research shows that students must be actively engaged with content in order to learn it. The student is not a passive recipient of teacher instruction but an active participant in it (Gall et al, 1990).

Best practices indicate that good teachers facilitate learning to engage active learning, they do not dispense learning. According to Ryan's "Self Determination Theory" (2000),

“effective teachers know how to intrinsically motivate students” (p.68). Students are not regurgitating but thinking for themselves. Teachers allow students to participate and structure a development of understanding. Through much oral discussion (narration), teachers monitor what students understand or don’t understand. Through this social interaction, teachers can then immediately scaffold the students’ understanding and help students to think critically, increasing student performance (Worthy & Hoffman, 1999).

Ruddell et al (1990) garnered a list of characteristics of great teachers and found that teachers who were not dispensers:

- care about their students,
- manifest excitement and enthusiasm,
- adapt instruction to meet needs, motives and interests, and
- use motivating strategies, are clear, engage students in intellectual discovery, and help students solve problems.

Research:

- Gall, M.D., Gall, J.P., Jacobsen, D.R., & Bullock, T.L. (1990). Tools for learning: A guide to teaching study skills. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Ruddell, R. B., Draheim, M., & Barnes, J. (1990). A comparative study of the teaching effectiveness of influential and non-influential teachers and reading comprehension development. In J. Zutell & S. McCormick (Eds.), *Literacy theory and research: Analyses from multiple paradigms* (pp. 153-162). Chicago, IL: National Reading Conference.
- Worthy, J., & Hoffman, J.V. (1999). Critical questions. *The Reading Teacher*, 52, 520-521.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-79.
- Ruddell, R. B. (1995). Those influential literacy teachers: Meaning negotiators and motivation builders. *The Reading Teacher*, 48, 454-463.
- “Ladson-Billings (1994) studied eight effective teachers of African American students; six of these taught in the upper elementary grades. She reports the following characteristics as typifying these successful teachers:
  - Believe all children can succeed.
  - See teaching as ‘pulling knowledge out’ versus putting it in.
  - View knowledge critically- as continually recreated and shared.
  - Facilitate fluid teacher-student relationships that are equitable and extend beyond the classroom.
  - Demonstrate connectedness with all students.
  - Encourage students to learn collaboratively, to teach each other and be responsible for each other.
  - Help students develop necessary skills.
  - Seek excellence but take individual differences into account” (Allington & Johnston, 2002).

#### 4. Relational Tools: Atmosphere, Discipline and Life

*build resiliency, result in higher standardized test scores, increase positive self-concepts, build student attachment to school, foster a belief in rules, and decrease student delinquency and drug use* (Hawkins et al., 1992; Henderson & Milstein, 2003)

There are three tools that a Relational School uses to teach: Atmosphere, Discipline (habits) and Life (ideas/broad curriculum). Each tool implements several different methods.

#### Research:

Researchers find that when the following six themes are COMBINED in a school, students and adults become resilient persons. Our three tools combine all six of them:

- a. increasing bonding (atmosphere, relationships with others, things, nature, ideas)
- b. setting clear and consistent boundaries (atmosphere, masterly inactivity, habits)
- c. teaching life skills (habits, broad curriculum)
- d. providing care and support (atmosphere, respect, co-learning, scaffolding)
- e. setting and communicating high expectations (life, high teacher expectations, no tracking, broad curriculum for all)
- f. providing opportunities for meaningful participation (life, broad curriculum, narration, service projects, internships, field studies)

(Hawkins et al., 1992 quoted Henderson & Milstein, 2003, p.13-14)

#### Atmosphere

Atmosphere constitutes the environment and ways of interacting with others. With a respectful atmosphere, a schoolhouse is a place where students and teachers “build the capacity to bounce back from adversity, adapt to pressures and problems encountered, and develop the competencies... necessary to do well in life.... [t]he resiliencies are initiative, independence, insight, relationship, humor, creativity, and morality” (Henderson & Milstein (2003, p.10).

Authentic learning, increased student achievement, proper self-esteem development, resiliency, and real community naturally occur through the following elements that constitute the tool, *Atmosphere*:

#### Respect

*teaches appropriate ways of interacting, provides a safe, stress free place to learn, students are simultaneously relaxed and challenged, the mind is not threatened and does not shut down*

No matter what their social or economic background, race, or sex, all children thrive in an atmosphere of kindness and gentleness. We actively build up a life of care and concern for others, common sense and ethical living. Yelling is not tolerated. Bullying is not tolerated. To help all persons in the school, the Restorative Practices Program will guide discipline and conflict.

Research:

-Gambrell, Morrow and Pressley (2007) find that exemplary teachers relate with children as persons, not pawns to be manipulated, brains to be filled or machines to be programmed:

*The affective quality in the room was exemplary. [The teacher] speaks to children with respect. She does not raise her voice, nor does she use punitive remarks, inapt facial expressions, or negative intonations. In this atmosphere, and from modeling, children learn to understand appropriate ways of interacting with others (p.80).*

-In their study of instruction, Michael Pressley and his colleagues identified...characteristics of instruction by exemplary first grade teachers: skills are explicitly taught, self-regulation is encouraged...the environment is positive with an emphasis on cooperation..." (Wilson et al., 2004, p.245).

-Raywid found in successful classrooms that "all are treated with respect and compassion and can meet with some degree of success...the teacher [demonstrates] genuine engagement with the learning" (2002, p.435).

-Without a shift in pedagogy that truly respects children as persons, Robinson (2006) warns that schools will continue to "mine children's minds" instead of tapping into "their whole being... to help them make something of their future".

-Ladson-Billings (1994) studied eight effective teachers of African American students; six of these taught in the upper elementary grades. She reports the following characteristics as typifying these successful teachers:

- Facilitate fluid teacher-student relationships that are equitable and extend beyond the classroom.
- Demonstrate connectedness with all students. (Allington & Johnston, 2002)

### Beautiful, Respectful, Orderly Environment

*students are simultaneously relaxed and challenged, the mind is not threatened and does not shut down*

Brain research talks about "relaxed alertness." The whole room must be relaxed but challenging. There has to be an environment that is respectful, caring, and orderly so that the child is relaxed but challenged. Too much challenge is threatening, and the frontal lobe of the brain shuts down and decreases learning (Caine & Caine, 1991).

In a Relational School, the facilities and classrooms are tastefully decorated and kept free of clutter. Beauty and order set a relaxed atmosphere and lifts the mind to something noble, thus it is challenging, not dumb-downed and distracting.

Research:

Caine R. and G. Caine. Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain. New York: Innovative Learning Publications, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1991.

Smith, R. (1985). *Freedom and Discipline*. London: George Allen & Unwin. What teachers need to do to create a good atmosphere and ambiance and relationships in classrooms.

### Co-learning between Teacher and Student/ Student and Student

*teachers are learning with and about the students, teachers model life-long learning, students are inwardly motivated and actively learning*

Best practices indicate that good teachers facilitate learning, they do not dispense it. To be a facilitator of learning, teachers come to the table with the students to learn, not to dispense knowledge. They learn WITH the children AND they learn ABOUT the children's needs because students are not regurgitating but thinking for themselves (Worthy & Hoffman, 1999).

Raywid found in successful classrooms that "all are treated with respect and compassion and can meet with some degree of success...the teacher [demonstrates] genuine engagement with the learning" (2002, p.435). Ruddell et al (1990) and Allington (2004) garnered a list of characteristics of great teachers and found that teachers who were not dispensers:

- manifest excitement and enthusiasm about learning.
- engage and inwardly motivate students through intellectual discovery and problem solving.

### Research:

- Ruddell, R. Bl, Draheim, M., & Barnes, J. (1990). A comparative study of the teaching effectiveness of influential and non-influential teachers and reading comprehension development. In J. Zutell & S. McCormick (Eds.), *Literacy theory and research: Analyses from multiple paradigms* (pp. 153-162). Chicago, IL: National Reading Conference.
- Worthy, J., & Hoffman, J.V. (1999). Critical questions. *The Reading Teacher*, 52, 520-521.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-79.
- Ruddell, R. B. (1995). Those influential literacy teachers: Meaning negotiators and motivation builders. *The Reading Teacher*, 48, 454-463.
- Ladson-Billings (1994) studied eight effective teachers of African American students; six of these taught in the upper elementary grades. She reports the following characteristics as typifying these successful teachers:
  - View knowledge critically, as continually recreated and shared.
  - Facilitate fluid teacher-student relationships that are equitable and extend beyond the classroom.
  - Encourage students to learn collaboratively, to teach each other and be responsible for each other. (Allington & Johnston, 2002).

### “Masterly Inactivity”

*students experience relaxed alertness, students experience self-determination*

This is a term unique to Relational Education. Teachers do not control students nor nag them. It is the sense of “safe freedom” that the teacher offers to students to take risks, experiment with ideas, and imagine. For instance, the teacher does not control students’ narrations nor the direction of the Student Talk after narrations. Teachers masterly set boundaries and allow children to take risks and talk and do while the teacher *seems* to be inactive. Masterly Inactivity helps create a relaxed alertness (Caine & Caine, 1991). Without self-determination or choice, students do not perform well in school (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Research:

-Caine R. and G. Caine. *Making connections: Teaching and the human brain*. New York: Innovative Learning Publications, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1991.

-Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-79.

-Smith, R. (1985). *Freedom and Discipline*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

- “Ladson-Billings (1994) studied eight effective teachers of African American students; six of these taught in the upper elementary grades. She reports the following characteristics as typifying these successful teachers:

- See teaching as ‘pulling knowledge out’ versus putting it in,
- View knowledge critically, as continually recreated and shared, and
- Demonstrate connectedness with all students (Allington & Johnston, 2002).

### Scaffolding in the Zone of Proximal Development

*students learn more and feel better about themselves and the subject area under study, reduces student confusion, keeps students on task, reduces uncertainty, surprise, and disappointment*

Masterly Inactivity also takes place through scaffolding, the technique presented by Vygotsky. The teacher knows their students and is masterly aware of the times when a student is in the “zone of proximal development” and needs a little help or knowledge from the teacher or books to move to the next step in learning.

Research:

- “Students learned more and felt better about themselves and the subject area under study” (Fisher, 1980 in Tomlinson, 2000).

-“Ladson-Billings (1994) studied eight effective teachers of African American students; six of these taught in the upper elementary grades. She reports the following characteristics as typifying these successful teachers: Help students develop necessary skills and seek excellence but take individual differences into account” (Allington & Johnston, 2002).

- Bransford, J., Brown, A., & Cocking, R. (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, and Experience & school*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

- Bruner, J. (1982). "The Language of Education." *Social Research*. 49, p. 852.
- Hedegaard, M. (1996). "The ZPD as Basis for Instruction." In Harry Daniels (Ed.) *An Introduction to Vygotsky*. London: Routledge. p. 229.
- Berger, K.S. (2009) *The Developing Person Through Childhood and Adolescence*. New York: Worth Publishers.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). "Interaction between learning and development." (pp. 79-91). In *Mind in Society*. (Trans. M. Cole). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

### Forms/Multi Age Classes

*increase cognitive skills, positive soft skills and self concepts, build community, better attitudes toward school, and trust between teacher and parents*

The word *form* is similar in meaning to other terms used to convey the ideas of multi age grouping, looping or persistent grouping. Teachers stay with their students for more than one year. Finland's teachers stay with their students for many years, and those students currently outscore all industrialized nations. New Zealand, a country with one of the highest literacy rates in the world, uses multiage grouping as common educational practice. "Students are moved forward based on their mastery of skills rather than their chronological age" (Kasten & Clarke, 1993, p 220). Deborah Meier views forms or looping as an essential concept for the perfect school (Goldberg 1991).

(Further description is found in Appendix A, "Instruction.")

Research:

- Increased cognitive and positive soft skills and positive self-concepts (Chase and Doan, 1994; Stegelin, 1997, Hart-Hewins and Villers, 1997; Katz et al., 1993; Stone, 1998).
- Builds a sense of community and family (Simel, 1998).
- Better attitudes toward school (Haynes, 1996; Pratt, 1986)
- Better trusting relations between teachers and parents. (Grant and Johnson, 1995; Kolstad and McFadden, 1998)

### Small Classes/Small Schools

*higher attendance and graduation rates, equal or better levels of academic success, fewer incidences of violence and discipline, higher levels of college matriculation, more parent involvement*

Dogwood will be a small school with small classes (20-25 K-12). Small schools have high rates of success because small schools and small classes generate and improve:

- *Governance* since communication is easier when the whole staff can meet around one common table.
- *Respect* since students and teachers get to know each other well.
- *Simplicity* since less bureaucracy makes it easier to individualize.
- *Safety* since strangers are easily spotted and teachers can respond quickly to rudeness or frustration.
- *Parent involvement* since parents are more likely to form alliances with

teachers who know their child and care about his or her progress.

- *Accountability* since no one needs bureaucratic data to find out how a student, a teacher or the school is doing. Everyone knows.
- *Belonging* since every student, not just the academic and athletic stars, is part of a community that contains adults (Deborah Meier, 1996).

#### Research:

-The U. S. Department of Education says that there is enough research to say that two things work in increasing student reading achievement- Class size of 20 or less and one-on-one tutoring (Allington, October, 2005).

- The shortcomings of large scale, factory-modeled schools have been well documented and studies reveal that “all else equal, students achieve at higher levels and feel more supported in smaller, communal school settings” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. ix).

- Student achievement in small schools is at least equal-and often superior-to student achievement in large schools. (Burke 1987; Caldas 1987; Edington and Gardner 1984; Fowler 1995; Gregory 1992; Haller, Monk, and Tien 1993; Howley 1996; Huang and Howley 1993; McGuire 1989; Melnick, et al. 1986; Smith and DeYoung 1988; Stockard and Mayberry 1992; Walberg 1992; Way 1985; Bates 1993; Eberts, Kehoe, and Stone 1982; Eichenstein 1994; Fowler and Walberg 1991; Kershaw and Blank 1993; Miller, Ellsworth, and Howell 1986; Robinson-Lewis 1991; Walberg 1992).

- Small Schools Improve High School Graduation Rates (Fetler 1989; Gregory 1992; Jewell 1989; Pittman and Haughwout 1987; Rogers 1987; Smith and DeYoung 1988; Stockard and Mayberry 1992; Toenjes 1989; Walberg 1992)

-Small Schools Improve Preparation for, and Matriculation into, Post-Secondary Options (Rogers 1987; Fowler 1992; Jewell 1989) or superior (Burke 1987; Swanson 1988)

-"Researchers observe that the effects of smallness on achievement are indirect, being mediated through other small-school features as quality of the social environment and students' sense of attachment to the school. Mitchell (2000) reminds us that in the studies conducted by Howley and others, school size had such a powerful positive effect on the achievement of poor students that it even trumped the beneficial effects of class size." Kathleen Cotton, 2001

-“Many of the reforms in curriculum and school organization that are promoted by critics of education have merit and should be intensified...reducing class sizes for lower-class children (particularly in the early grades)...” (Rothstein, 2004, p.109)

-Dollars & Sense II: Lessons from Good, Cost-Effective Small Schools (Barbara Kent Lawrence et al. Knowledge Works Foundation, Concordia, and Architects of Achievement.2005)

#### High Expectations for ALL Students

*increase student achievement, close the achievement gap*

One strong factor in student learning is teacher expectations. Data on teacher expectation research has revealed that some teachers treat high- and low-achieving



students differently and that teachers' expectations appear to be associated with student achievement (Good, 1981). In Relational Education, all teachers and adults hold high expectations of all children since they are persons with minds and an innate desire to know. There will be no tracking, and all persons in the school will have classes that challenge them and nurture their needs.

#### Research:

- *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1968), Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson
- *Two Decades of Research on Teacher Expectations: Findings and Future Directions*

Thomas L. Good, *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 32-47 (1987)

-“Low versus High Expectations: A Review of Teacher Expectations Effects on Minority Students.” McCormick, Theresa E.; Noriega, Tino, *Journal of Educational Equity and Leadership*, v6 n3 p224-34 Fall 1986

-Longitudinal studies support the SFP hypothesis that teacher expectations can predict changes in student achievement and behavior beyond effects accounted for by previous achievement and motivation (Jussim & Eccles, 1992).-“Ladson-Billings (1994) studied eight effective teachers of African American students; six of these taught in the upper elementary grades. She reports the following characteristics as typifying these successful teachers: Believe all children can succeed. Seek excellence but take individual differences into account” (Allington & Johnston 2002).

#### Authentic, Formative Assessment

*students apply knowledge, prepares students for real world assessments, respects learning styles, informs instruction, fosters self-assessment, improves language and literacy environments, decreases stress levels and low self-esteem, increases reading and math scores*

Assessment is authentic when we directly examine student performance on worthy intellectual tasks. Traditional assessment, by contrast, relies on indirect or proxy 'items'--efficient, simplistic substitutes from which we think valid inferences can be made about the student's performance at those valued challenges (Grant Wiggins). The negative personal and societal effects of traditional testing for students are well-documented: exposure to a less challenging curriculum, significantly increased dropout rates, and lives of unemployment and welfare dependency (Oakes, 1986a; Oakes, 1986b; Shepard & Smith, 1986; Jaeger, 1991). These researchers conclude that using testing as a mechanism for sorting and selecting students for access to educational and economic opportunities is antithetical to achieving equity.

Thus, over-use of testing is avoided. Authentic assessments, such as narrations, portfolios, summative end-of-term essay exams and narrative report cards allow the child to tell what she knows rather than be caught in what she doesn't know. They direct children, teachers, parents and curriculum advisors to ways to provide the next level of scaffolding in a particular child's environment. That will be different for each child. (For the older years, a grading system is implemented to prepare high school students for college systems; however, the importance of grades will be

deemphasized in various ways while formative assessment is emphasized.)

(Please see the Relational Assessment piece in Appendix A for more details.)

## Research

-Experiencing high levels of stress for prolonged periods can destroy brain cells.

Implications: reduce stress (no more pop quizzes) *Psychology Today*, Sep/Oct 2001.

-(Meisels, Samuel J.; Atkins-Burnett, Sally; Xue, Yange; Nicholson, Julie; Bickel, Donna DiPrima; & Son, Seung-Hee. (2003). Creating a system of accountability: The impact of instructional assessment on elementary children's achievement test scores. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 11(9). (growth in reading from one year to the next that far exceeded the demographically matched contrast group as well as the average change shown by all other students in the district...greater gains in math)

- "...there is no basis for comparing one student against others. The context demands that I evaluate each student's growth over time, an important spur to learning for its own sake" (Atwell, 1988, p.79).

- "For as long as education promotes a cat-and-mouse game whereby students have incentive to both please us and *appear* to understand what they are supposed to learn (irrespective of whether they do or not), the challenge of assessing for real understanding becomes greater. (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p.9)

- Findings from study of preschoolers suggest that an authentic assessment approach may have

a positive impact on the language and literacy environment. ("The Effects of Outcomes-Driven Authentic Assessment on Classroom Quality," Hallam, Grisham-Brown, Gao & Brookshire. *ECRP Vol. 9 No. 2*, Fall 2007).

- Mary Anne Raywid, (2002). *Accountability: What's Worth Measuring?*

- Archbald, D. (1991). *Authentic assessment: What it means and how it can help schools*. Madison, WI: National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, University of Wisconsin.

- Social studies evaluation must reflect the importance of students' thinking, and their preparation to be lifelong responsible citizens, rather than rewarding memorization of decontextualized facts.

(Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde, 1998).

- Archbald, D. & Newmann, F. (1989) "The Functions of Assessment and the Nature of Authentic Academic Achievement," in Berlak (ed.) *Assessing Achievement: Toward the development of a New Science of Educational Testing*. Buffalo, NY: SUNY Press.

- Frederiksen, J. & Collins, A. (1989) "A Systems Approach to Educational Testing," *Educational Researcher*, 18, 9 (December).

- National Commission on Testing and Public Policy (1990) *From Gatekeeper to Gateway: Transforming Testing in America*. Chestnut Hill, MA: NCTPP, Boston College.

- Wiggins, G. (1989) "A True Test: Toward More Authentic and Equitable Assessment," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 70, 9 (May).

- Wolf, D. (1989) "Portfolio Assessment: Sampling Student Work," *Educational*

*Leadership* 46, 7, pp. 35-39 (April).

#### Varied, Short Lessons

*focus brain effort, match the natural laws of learning and produces greater results*

Sylvester's research showed that the human brain can attend no longer than 30 minutes, so going beyond that is a waste of time (1997). To respect children's minds and bodies and ability to attend, classes are short and varied. Disciplined subjects are in the morning hours when attention is keen and more mechanical tasks are saved for the afternoons (drama, handiwork, mapmaking, or sport). Alternating the types of short lessons focuses brain effort, keeping the students cheerfully on task with minimal correction.

#### Research:

-Sylwester, R. (1997). "On Using Knowledge: A Conversation with Bob Sylwester." *Educational Leadership* 54, no. 6: 16-19.

-Positive Effects of "Activity Breaks" on Classroom On-Task Behavior

Investigators in Georgia studied the effects of an activity break on classroom behavior in a sample of 43 fourth-grade students in 1998. Students exhibited significantly more on-task classroom behavior and significantly less fidgeting on days with a scheduled activity break than on non-activity days.

#### Meaningful, Individualized Homework

*Less frustration and exhaustion, more time for other activities, keeps interest in learning, supports family relationships (Kohn, 2007)*

Research demonstrates that traditional homework has little to no effect on student achievement. "For starters, there is absolutely no evidence of any academic benefit from assigning homework in elementary or middle school. For younger students, in fact, there isn't even a *correlation* between whether children do homework (or how much they do) and any meaningful measure of achievement. At the high school level, the correlation is weak and tends to disappear when more sophisticated statistical measures are applied. Meanwhile, no study has ever substantiated the belief that homework builds character or teaches good study habits" (Kohn, Feb. 2007). Homework does, however, prove to have an adverse effect on families. Since research does indicate that students need to read for 2 or more hours a day to equal one year's growth in reading (Allington, 2005), students are expected to read at home after school, on the weekends and during holidays. Thus, homework in our program is non-traditional. Students read a good book at home and do individualized assignments based on personal needs only when necessary.

(Further details and studies are found in "Instruction" of Appendix A.)

#### Research:

-Kohn, Alfie. "The Case against Homework." Principal, Feb. 2007.

-Bennett, Sara, and Nancy Kalish. *The Case Against Homework: How Homework Is Hurting Our Children and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Crown, 2006).

- Buell, John. *Closing the Book on Homework: Enhancing Public Education and Freeing Family Time*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004).
- Dudley-Marling, Curt. "How School *Troubles* Come Home: The Impact of Homework on Families of Struggling Learners." *Current Issues in Education* [On-line] 6, 4 (2003).
- Hinchey, Patricia. "Rethinking Homework." *MASCD* [Missouri Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development] *Fall Journal*, December 1995: 13-17.

### High Levels of Meaningful Community Involvement

*students develop positive relationships with adults and find mentors, decreases crime in the community, decreases negative, harmful behaviors* (Miller & Toogood, 2005; Sanders, 2006)

Deliberate hospitality- invitations to observe, to attend recitals and dramas, to book clubs, to displays and workshops- encourages a growing partnership with home, community and school. Students build relationships with those in their community through field studies with places and people outside the school, through high school internships and through service projects.

(Further description is found in "Instruction" of Appendix A.)

Research:

- Marazza, L. L. (2003). Engage the public in a productive and proactive manner. In *The 5 Essentials of Organizational Excellence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. 71-84.
- Miller, T., & Leslie Toogood, A. (April, 2005). Creating asset -rich communities. *Principal Leadership*. p. 33-37.
- Sanders, M. (2006). *Building school community partnerships, collaboration for student success*.

### Discipline (Habit Formation)

Researchers are finding the need to help students develop both learning and living habits. Howard Gardner calls for Find Minds for the Future. Costa and Kallik promote 16 Habits of Mind. Employers lament the dearth of soft skills in young employees coming out of colleges. Though they can teach their young employees academic skills, they cannot teach social skills and strong work ethics. Rothstein (2004) posits that schools are in the position to meet these needs, "...perseverance, self-confidence, self-discipline, punctuality, the ability to communicate, social responsibility, and the ability to work with others and resolve conflicts...these are important goals of public education. In some respects, they may be more important than academic outcomes" (p.109).

Research:

- Costa, A., & Kallick, B. (2000). *Habits of mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Gardner, H. (2006). *Five minds for the future*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School.
- "Science education can build a knowledge base focused on essential concepts, rather than disconnected topics or bits of information" (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.116).
- "Understanding large ideas and themes and developing inquiring habits of mind, in other words, are the central goals for teaching and learning science" (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.11).

Discipline or habit formation is a key tool used in a relational education. The following are the methods of habit formation:

a. Narration

*builds the habit of attention, increases reading levels, increases comprehension, vocabulary and fluency*

Information cannot simply be poured into the brain. Learners must connect with the information and ideas and then process it. This is what narration does. Every reading, from whole, narrative books of the best literary quality, is followed by a narration. Material is read once and then acted out, drawn, retold, sung or copied. Then students generate the questions without teacher interrogation and dialogue together, learning from one another's ideas and experiences, thus learning more and retaining more.

(Further description is found in "Instruction" of Appendix A.)

Research

- retelling *impacts* comprehension; it does not just *reveal* it (Kalmbach, 1980)
- require construction of knowledge built upon past experiences, present knowledge, relationships with the audience, and the organizing, synthesizing and evaluating of text (Kalmbach, 1980; Gambrell, Koskinen & Kapinus, 1991)
- "When the content of an English course is ideas- thinking and learning through writing, reading, listening, and talking- and when students in the course pursue their own ideas and purposes in the company of friends and their teacher, the middle school English classroom has the potential to become an extraordinarily interesting place." Atwell, p.71, 1988
- "Human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures." (Theodore Sarbin, Narrative Psychology, 1986, p.8)
- Pickert, S., & Chase, M. L. (1978). Story retelling: An informal technique for evaluating children's language. *Reading Teacher*, 31(5), 528-531.
- Karnoouh-Vertalier, M. (1997). Narration as an aid to language acquisition and access to literacy. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, i(2), 63-74.
- Social studies must involve students in active participation in the classroom and the wider community; -Social studies should involve students in both independent inquiry and cooperative learning to build skills and habits needed for lifelong, responsible living; -Social studies should involve students in reading, writing, observing, discussing, and debating to ensure their active participation in learning (Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde, 1998).
- Stephen Krashen (1982, 1985, 1988, 1991) "Natural Approach" to foreign

languages. “Total Physical Response Storytelling” involves having children narrate pictures/picture sequences. (Krashen, 1991; Catton, 2006)

(Further explanation is found in “Instruction” of Appendix A.)

b. Reading Aloud

*increases comprehension and literacy development, builds fluency*

In Relational Education, teachers and students read aloud together, especially in the younger years because research demonstrates that one of the most important activities for building success in literacy is reading aloud to children. The experience is most valuable when accompanied by interactive discussions with adults and children (narration) to introduce new vocabulary and language structures. Such conversation leads to understanding or comprehension of the story read. (Morrow & Gambrell, 2004; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002; Bus et al. 1995; Wells, 1985; mentioned by Gambrell, Morrow and Pressley 2007, p.65 bottom). Students experience increased reading achievement, fluency and vocabulary.

Research

-Robbins, C., & Ehri, L.C. (1994). Reading storybooks to kindergartners helps them learn new vocabulary words. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 86, 54-64.

-Rosenhouse, J., Feitelson, D., Kita, B., & Goldstein, Z. (1997). Interactive reading aloud to Israeli first graders: Its contribution to literacy development. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 32, 168-183.

-After reading a historical story aloud, the teacher requires students to retell it orally, pictorially, or dramatically (Wilson, Martens, Arya, & Altwerger, 2004).

c. Student Talk

*increases retention, recall, connections and meaning making; greater quality in what is known and more inferences and personal connections (John, Lui & Tannok, 2003), increases student achievement (Allington, 2002)*

Allington (2002) discovered that effective reading teachers used the technique of *student talk* rather than *teacher interrogation*. Ivey and Fisher (2006) included teacher interrogation in their list of ineffective learning strategies. “Despite the long-standing practice of literal-level questioning after reading, we have no reason to believe it actually creates better readers” (p.10). In student talk, students generate their own questions and drive the conversation, thus making their own meaning, connections and social interactions, igniting many parts of the brain for learning.

(Further description is found in “Instruction” of Appendix A)

Research:

-John, Lui & Tannok, 2003

- Allington, R. L. (June 2002). What I’ve learned about effective reading instruction. *Kappan*, 83(10), 740-747.

-“When the content of an English course is ideas- thinking and learning through writing, reading, listening, and talking- and when students in the course pursue their own ideas and purposes in the company of friends and their teacher, the middle

school English classroom has the potential to become an extraordinarily interesting place.” Atwell, p.71, 1988

-Research demonstrates that one of the most important activities for building success in literacy is reading aloud to children. The experience is most valuable when accompanied by interactive discussions with adults and children to introduce new vocabulary and language structures. Such conversation leads to understanding or comprehension of the story read. (Morrow & Gambrell, 2004; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002; Bus et al. 1995; Wells, 1985; mentioned by Gambrell, Morrow and Pressley 2007, p.65 bottom).

d. Integrated, Consecutive Knowledge

*provides context and background knowledge, facilitates and enhances student comprehension, learning and reading strategies, increases interest and learning from text, increases retention*

No lesson is composed of stray knowledge; rather learning is consecutive, integrated across disciplines and chronological.

Research:

-In their study of instruction, Michael Pressley and his colleagues identified the following characteristics of instruction by exemplary first grade teachers: literature is emphasized, there is much reading and writing... connections are made across the curriculum throughout the day...” (Wilson et al., 2004, p.245).

- Chi, Feltovich and Galser, 1981; Chiesi, Spilich and Voss, 1979, McNamara, Kintsch, Songer and Kintsch, 1996, Means and Voss, 1985, Afflerbach, 1986, Lundeberg, 1987, Alexander, Kulikowich and Schulze, 1994, Tobias, 1994, Chi, de Leeuw, Chiu and LaVancher 1994

-Science ought to have a major presence in history courses because of the enormous impact of science and technology on all of history. And history should be taken seriously in science courses because history alone provides a context for seeing how science really works over time and how it relates to mathematics and technology and to what else is happening in human culture” (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2000, p.242).

e. Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum

*students actively participate in learning, understand abstract ideas, increase reading and writing practice and increase reading and writing scores*

“Recent studies show that only half of students who start college manage to complete a degree (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2005). The inability to read well is surely tied to this abysmal level of degree completion, so to improve student success, the reading problem must be addressed” (Horning, 2007). Students need to read and write in all the subject areas, including the Arts and Physical Education.

Research:

-Horning, Alice S. (2007, May 14). Reading across the curriculum as the key to

student success. *Across the Disciplines*, 4. Retrieved May 7, 2010, from <http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/articles/horning2007.cfm>

-“The study of narrative and the use of stories in the work of educators is a growing phenomenon (Carter, 1993; Jalongo, 1992, Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Narratives or stories are central to our lives in that ‘the stories we hear and the stories we tell shape the meaning and texture of our lives at every stage and juncture’” (Cooper, 1995, p.121 , editors Lambert et al).

- Reading Across the Curriculum as the Key to Student Success Alice S. Horning

-Social studies should involve students in reading, writing, observing, discussing, and debating to ensure their active participation in learning (Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde, 1998).

-“Learning science means integrating reading, writing, speaking, and math” (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.118).

“The power of printed words rests in the author’s ability to enrich and extend the ideas already within a reader. New knowledge gained from reading is actually a rearrangement of prior knowledge into new connections. With something to work with, an author can help readers understand abstract ideas that they could never experience firsthand. But if readers have little in storage related to the content of what they read, they will gain little from reading” (Lowery, 1998, p.26).

f. Observation

*connects observation, language development and scientific processing*

Children learn to observe and talk about what they observe, and there is a crucial connection to language. Language is innate and the human’s tool for learning. Children must observe and narrate. Through nature study, picture study, composer study and lesson studies, students (and teachers) spend much time in observation and in discussion of what is observed. We have to stop pouring in and see that children learn from within. They share what they see, rather than being told what to see (Brooks & Brooks, 1993).

Research:

-Cooper, P.H., F.P. Roth, D.L. Speece and C. Schatschneider. “The Contribution of Oral Language Skills to the Development of Phonological Awareness.” *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 23 (2002): 399-416.

-Brooks, G & Brooks, M. (1993) *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms*. Alexandria, Va: ASCD.

g. Student Responsibility

*students develop a sense of ownership and stewardship and self-determination, decreases passivity and alienation, increases school performance through natural engagement, struggling and at-risk students succeed*

According to Ryan and Deci’s work (2000), students without choice or self-determination do not perform well in school. Children need to have dominion. Thus, they narrate and participate in student talk throughout the day across the



curriculum. Every year, they participate in service learning projects. Every month, they invite speakers and practice hospitality. At the end of every day, they complete school chores to foster their responsibility to one another and the environment.

Research:

-Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-79.

-*Impacts of service learning*. (2007). Retrieved from [http://www.servicelearning.org/instant\\_info/fact\\_sheets/k-12\\_facts/impacts/Issue\\_brief\\_community\\_service\\_and\\_service\\_learning\\_in\\_America's\\_schools](http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/impacts/Issue_brief_community_service_and_service_learning_in_America's_schools). (2008).

Retrieved from

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/08\\_1112\\_Isa\\_prevalence\\_factsheet](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/08_1112_Isa_prevalence_factsheet)

-*Curriculum development for k-12 service learning*. (2005). Retrieved from [http://www.servicelearning.org/instant\\_info/fact\\_sheets/k-12\\_facts/curriculum/Educators](http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/curriculum/Educators). (n.d.). Retrieved from

[http://www.learnandserve.gov/for\\_individuals/educators/index.asp](http://www.learnandserve.gov/for_individuals/educators/index.asp)

-“Ladson-Billings (1994) studied eight effective teachers of African American students; six of these taught in the upper elementary grades. She reports the following characteristics as typifying these successful teachers:

- Encourage students to learn collaboratively, to teach each other and be responsible for each other.
- Help students develop necessary skills. (Allington & Johnston, 2002).

h. Restorative Practice Model: Restorative Discipline and Natural Consequences  
*fewer discipline problems, builds trust and sense of safety, high rates of reparations, high victim satisfaction*

“Restorative practices involve changing relationships by engaging people: doing things WITH them, rather than TO them or FOR them—providing both high control and high support at the same time” (Mirsky, 2003). Rather than using punitive approaches to discipline, restorative means are pursued. Natural consequences result from choices. This is not behaviorism. Children develop respectful and restorative habits for reconciliation and collaboration. The late Silvan S. Tomkins's writings about psychology of affect (Tomkins, 1962, 1963, 1991) assert that human relationships are best and healthiest when there is free expression of affect—or emotion—minimizing the negative, maximizing the positive, but allowing for free expression. Donald Nathanson, director of the Silvan S. Tomkins Institute, adds that it is through the mutual exchange of expressed affect that we build community, creating the emotional bonds that tie us all together (Nathanson, 1998).

The school will implement the International Restorative Practices Program. Restorative practices such as conferences and circles provide a safe environment for people to express and exchange intense emotion while restoring broken relationships.

(Further description is found in “Instruction” of Appendix A)

Research:

- Restorative Practices and the Transformation at West Philadelphia High School, Laura Mirsky, International Institute for Restorative Practices, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 2009-06-22
- Restorative Practices in Schools: Research Reveals Power of Restorative Approach, Part II; Abbey Porter, 2007-06-06
- “Our schools do much more than pass along requisite knowledge to the students attending them...They also influence the way those students look upon themselves and others. They affect the way learning is valued and sought after and lay the foundations of lifelong habits of thought and action. ...contribute to the growth of character...” (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, xii, noted in Donaldson, 2003, 42).
- Rothstein (2004) concurs, “...perseverance, self-confidence, self-discipline, punctuality, the ability to communicate, social responsibility, and the ability to work with others and resolve conflicts...these are important goals of public education. In some respects, they may be more important than academic outcomes” (p.109).
- Nathanson, D. (1997). Affect theory and the compass of shame. In M. Lansky and A. Morrison (Eds.), *The Widening Scope of Shame*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, Inc.
- McCold, P. (2003). A survey of assessment research on mediation and conferencing. In L. Walgrave (Ed.), *Repositioning Restorative Justice* (pp. 67-120). Devon, UK: Willan Publishing.
- American Humane Association (2003). FGDM Research and Evaluation. *Protecting Children*, 18(1-2): whole volume.

- i. The Asian Zone of Proximal Development Mathematical Learning Model  
*teachers hear the lack of understanding and see what pieces of information are lacking in the student’s knowledge, to help move them to the next level of knowledge; students participate rather than regurgitate*

Asian students consistently outperform American students in mathematics. “Lessons in Japanese classrooms were found to be remarkably different from those in Germany and the U.S., promoting students’ understanding, while U.S. and German teachers seemed to focus more exclusively on the development of skills” (Martinez, 2001; Roulet, 2000; Stigler & Hiebert, 1997 as cited by CPRM Math Reform). The Whole to Part method of instruction used in Japan features the following components: “(i) the posing of a complex, thought-provoking problem to the class; (ii) individual and/or small group generation of possible approaches for solving the problem; (iii) the communication of strategies and methods by various students to the class; (iv) classroom discussion and collaborative development of the mathematical concepts/understandings; (v) summary and clarification of the findings by the teacher; and (vi) consolidation of understanding through the practice of similar and/or more complex problems” (CPRM Math Reform). Here, students invent new solutions, engage in conceptual thinking and communicate (narrate) ideas. The

teacher is aware of misunderstandings, can scaffold in the child's zone of proximal development so that the child can progress to the next level, and uses prior understandings of the whole to teach parts.

In many American math classes, however, teachers do most of the communicating, and skills, not concepts, are the focus. This is the traditional Part to Whole approach. The teacher presents a problem, explains the parts, skills, and processes to solve the problem, and then students use those skills to solve similar problems. It is passive learning and memorization rather than understanding.

Since the Whole to Part approach is more relational and proven to increase math scores because of increased understanding, Dogwood will model math instruction after the Zone of Proximal Development Mathematical Learning Model. To aid in this method, the teachers will create Math Talk Learning Communities in which students co-question with the teacher, explain (narrate), support mathematical processes and discuss mathematical concepts and ideas (student talk).

(Further description is found in "Instruction" of Appendix A.)

#### Research:

-“Experience shows that many students fail to master important mathematical topics. What’s missing from traditional instruction is sufficient emphasis on three important ingredients: communication, connections and contexts” (Steen, 2007, 12).

-“...U.S. teachers are expected to cover far more content than teachers in other countries...Yet, German and Japanese students significantly outperform U.S. students in mathematics and science...the problem inherent in the current standards movement in the U.S.- there is simply too much content to address in an adequate manner” (Marzano, 2003, p.26).

-Martinez, J. (2001). “Exploring, inventing, and discovering mathematics: A pedagogical response to the TIMSS.” *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School*, 7(2), 114–119.

-Roulet, G. (2000). “TIMSS: What can we learn about Ontario mathematics?” *Ontario Mathematics Gazette*, 38(3), 15–23.

-Stigler, J., & Hiebert, J. (1999). “The teaching gap: Best ideas from the world’s teachers for improving education in the classroom.” New York: The Free Press.

-Stigler, J., & Hiebert, J. (1999). “The TIMSS 1999 video study.” Washington, DC: United States Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. (Available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/Video.asp>)

-Watanabe, T. (2002). “Learning from Japanese lesson study.” *Educational Leadership*, 59(6), 36–39

-Hufferd-Ackles, K., Fuson, K. C., & Sherin, M. G. (2004). Describing levels and components of a math-talk learning community. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 35(2), 81–116.

-National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. (2000). *Principles and standards for school mathematics*. Reston, VA: Author.”

j. Literacy Instruction

*motivates, develops a rich vocabulary, fosters imagination and exploration, develops necessary skills, fosters fluency and comprehension*

Years of research and practice have demonstrated that a balanced approach to literacy instruction is most efficacious. Research shows that whole language reading instruction *on its own* is inadequate. Phonics instruction *on its own* is also inadequate. In a whole language classroom, whole books are read instead of textbooks and basals, and learning to read takes place through immersion in those whole books. Phonics is not typically taught in the traditional whole language classroom. In the most simplistic terms, phonics instruction requires students to learn the rules of letter sounds. Often, traditional phonics instruction is disjointed in that textbooks and worksheets are disconnected from real books, interesting ideas and the rest of the curriculum.

The charter application clearly demonstrates that DCS uses a balanced literacy approach that includes some research-based whole language approaches that are successful (e.g., whole books, sustained reading) IN ADDITION TO the research-based phonics instructional methods that are also successful (e.g., phonics rules, word studies).

It should be noted that the balanced literacy framework is dynamic; that is, it continues to be refined as research informs practice. For example, we agree with Peggy Colgan-Davis (University of Pennsylvania) that the list of best practices in reading instruction (Phonemic Awareness; Phonics; Fluency; Comprehension; Vocabulary) is missing one crucial practice: Interest. The books and reading must be interesting to students.

The Balanced Literacy approach combines effective practices of the phonics and whole language approaches that meet the list of Best Practices in reading instruction, including Interest. Those practices, which Dogwood implements, include:

- Word Study
- Phonics Instruction
- Whole, Narrative Books
- Reading Aloud
- Reading 1 ½ -2 Hours a Day (John Guthrie)
- Foreign and Native Language Immersion at an Early Age (Krashen, Catton 2006)
- Narration (retelling, good books, student talk and writing)
- Recitations of Narrative Literature
- Transcription and Dictation of Narrative Literature
- Reading and Writing across the Curriculum

Research:

-In their study of reading instruction, Michael Pressley and his colleagues identified the following characteristics of instruction by exemplary first grade teachers: literature

is emphasized, there is much reading and writing... connections are made across the curriculum throughout the day..." (Wilson et al., 2004, p.245).

-Allington, R. L. (June 2002). What I've learned about effective reading instruction. *Kappan*, 83(10), 740-747.

-Ivey, G., Fisher, D (Summer 2006). Learning from what doesn't work. *Educational Leadership*. Vol. 63, p. 7-12.

-Morrow, L.M., Gambrell, L., & Pressley, M. (Eds.) (2003). *Best practices in literacy Instruction*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). New York, New York: Guilford Press.

-Harwayne, S. (1999). *Going public*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishers, chapters 2, 5, 7.

-“Human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures.” (Theodore Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology*, 1986, p.8)

- Literature motivates, provides rich vocabulary for learning, and suggests a variety of concepts to explore.” Wilson, Martens, Arya and Altwerger p.242 2004 Wilson, G.P., et al. (2004). Readers, instruction, and the NRP. *Kappan*, 86(3), 242-246.

- Basic content, facts and skills are not neglected because they help solve, evaluate, synthesize, compare or illustrate the big ideas. Such a balanced approach is effective, and in literacy instruction, it is referred to as balanced literacy. Children learn literacy skills such as phonemes and punctuation or mapping skills and important historical facts and use them when reading whole books, biographies, and rich expository text and when processing projects, all full of ideas used to ignite critical thinking (Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley, 2007).

-“It concludes that in grades four through twelve, literacy instruction should address at least six key areas of concern: reading fluency; vocabulary knowledge, content knowledge, higher level reasoning and thinking skills; reading comprehension strategies; and student motivation and engagement.” From *Federal Support for Adolescent Literacy: A Solid Investment* from Alliance for Excellent Education June 2007 p.2

- Marie Clay promoted “emergent literacy behaviors: and the reading of good literature to children. The explicit teaching of skills was seen as not appropriate for young children [in preschool and kindergarten]” (Gambrell, Morrow and Pressley 2007, p.61 bottom).

-In classrooms where phonics is taught in the context of rereading favorite stories, songs, and poems, children develop and use phonics knowledge better than in classrooms where skills are taught in isolation. (Weaver, 1994b)

-- A well-exercised imagination is crucial to making moral and rational judgments. And we learn to exercise our imaginations in stories—fiction and fantasy and fairy tales most tellingly. (Doug Jones, *Credenda Agenda*, Imaginative Succession, Vol. 13, Issue 2, 2007, Poetics)

-Morrow, et al. (1990) suggest that a blend of approaches, coupling some elements of more traditional reading readiness programs with a strong storybook reading component, is a sound choice for development of a literacy instruction package.

-“When the content of an English course is ideas- thinking and learning through writing, reading, listening, and talking- and when students in the course pursue their own ideas and purposes in the company of friends and their teacher, the middle school English classroom has the potential to become an extraordinarily interesting

place." Atwell, p.71, 1988

-Develops lifelong readers and writers (Silver bullets, babies, and bath water: Literature response groups in a balanced literacy program, DL Spiegel - The Reading Teacher, 1998)

- There *is* the provision of explicit and incidental teaching of literacy. Children learn in different ways and there is a need to balance explicit, direct teaching approaches (Adams, 1990; Hancock, 1999) with the power of immediate, incidental teaching (Goodman and Watson, 1998).

-A survey of the instructional practices of grade 5 teachers nominated as effective in promoting literacy (M Pressley, L Yokoi, J Rankin, R Wharton ... - Scientific Studies of ..., 1997 - informaworld.com ... with a number of proponents of balanced beginning literacy instruction (eg, Adams, 1990; Duffy, 1991 Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write.

-LM Morrow a balanced perspective in early literacy instruction (constructivist approaches and explicit instruction models)

- Strategies to support balanced literacy approaches in pre-and in-service teacher education

tc.edu [PDF]R Heydon, K Hibbert, L Iannacci - Journal of adolescent & adult literacy, 2004 - IRA

-Evaluation of a Whole-School Approach to Prevention and Intervention in Early Literacy

CA Crevola, PW Hill - Journal of Education for Students Placed ..., 1998 - informaworld.com

-Best Practices in Literacy Instruction (JAL Vacca, RT Vacca, MK Gove, L Burkey, LA Lenhart, 1999) NEW! Chapter on balanced reading instruction. (Ch. 2); NEW! Emphasis on phonics-based strategies

k. Varied Journals and Notebooks

*students process and use language, active way to participate in learning, writing shapes thinking (Langer), children do their OWN learning, students become competent members of society through language (Ochs)*

Standards are learned when students are actively engaged. Research shows that students must be actively engaged with content in order to learn it. The student is not a passive recipient of teacher instruction, but an active participant in it (Gall et al, 1990). In a Relational School, language is developed through narrations. To increase the habits of attention, retention, thinking, and connecting, students (and adults when appropriate) use varied journals and notebooks to process their learning (e.g., Narration Journals, Nature Study Journals, the Book of Centuries; Copywork and Transcription Journals for dictation, spelling, composition; Science Lab Notebooks; and various Reflective Journals)

Research:

Wise, J., R. Sevcik, R. Morris, M. Lovett, and M. Wolf. "The Relationship among Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary, Listening Comprehension, Pre-Reading Skills, Word Identification Skills, and Reading Comprehension by Children with

Reading Disabilities." *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 50 (2007): 1093-1109.

Zimmerman, Frederick J., Dimitri A. Christakis and Andrew N. Meltzoff. "Associations between Media Viewing and Language Development in Children Under Age 2 Years." *The Journal of Pediatrics* 151, no. 4 (2007): 364-368.

Goodman Y. "Retelling of Literature and the Comprehension Process." *Theory into Practice* 21, no. 4: 301-307.

Egan, K.. *Teaching as Story Telling*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.

"War over Words." *Science Magazine* 317, (2007): 10-15.

Allington, Richard L.. "The Schools we have. The Schools we need." *The Reading Teacher* 48, no. 1 (1994): 14-29.

Brown Hazal and Brian Comabourne. *Read and Retell*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997.

Caine R. and G. Caine. *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain*. New York: Innovative Learning Publications, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1991.

Cooper, P.H., F.P. Roth, D.L. Speece and C. Schatschneider. "The Contribution of Oral Language Skills to the Development of Phonological Awareness." *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 23 (2002): 399-416.

Gall, M.D., Gall, J.P., Jacobsen, D.R., & Bullock, T.L. (1990). *Tools for learning: A guide to teaching study skills*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Ochs, E., & Schieffelin, B. (1984). *Language acquisition and socialization: Three developmental stories and their implications*. In R. A. Shweder & R. A. Levine (Eds.), *Culture theory: Essays on mind, self, and emotion* (pp. 276-320). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Langer, J. A., & Applebee, A. N. (1987). *How writing shapes thinking*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

- "When the content of an English course is ideas- thinking and learning through writing, reading, listening, and talking- and when students in the course pursue their own ideas and purposes in the company of friends and their teacher, the middle school English classroom has the potential to become an extraordinarily interesting place." Atwell, p.71, 1988

- A survey of the instructional practices of grade 5 teachers nominated as effective in promoting literacy (M Pressley, L Yokoi, J Rankin, R Wharton ... - *Scientific Studies of ...*, 1997 - [informaworld.com](http://informaworld.com) ... with a number of proponents of balanced beginning literacy instruction (e.g., Adams, 1990; Duffy, 1991 *Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write*

### Life (Ideas)

We believe that "the mind feeds on ideas." Thus, ideas bring life to the mind and person. Following are critical methods that constitute the tool, *Life*:

#### a. Concepts and Big Ideas

*"big ideas focus learning, deepen student understanding, and foster inquiry into important ideas and issues" (Seif, 2003, p.54), ignite critical thinking*

Dry facts and information on their own are to the mind like sawdust is to the stomach. Fortunately, they are easily digested or learned, though, when wrapped in stories informed by ideas. They then have meaning and relevance. All learning in a Relational School is informed by ideas, and time is spent on concepts and in books instead of covering a lot of material.

Research:

-Basic content, facts and skills are not neglected because they help solve, evaluate, synthesize, compare or illustrate the big ideas. Such a balanced approach is effective, and in literacy instruction, it is referred to as balanced literacy. Children learn literacy skills such as phonemes and punctuation or mapping skills and important historical facts and use them when reading whole books, biographies, and rich expository text and when processing projects, all full of ideas used to ignite critical thinking (Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley, 2007).

-“When the content of an English course is ideas- thinking and learning through writing, reading, listening, and talking- and when students in the course pursue their own ideas and purposes in the company of friends and their teacher, the middle school English classroom has the potential to become an extraordinarily interesting place.” (Atwell, p.71, 1988 )

-Social studies teaching should involve exploration of open questions that challenge students’ thinking (Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde, 1998).

“Science education can build a knowledge base focused on essential concepts, rather than disconnected topics or bits of information” (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.116).

“Understanding large ideas and themes and developing inquiring habits of mind, in other words, are the central goals for teaching and learning science” (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.11).

“Teaching should present key topics with enough concrete detail and hands-on involvement to make them interesting and memorable, but not with so much that the main ideas are obscured and that students believe that memorizing a collection of details or carrying out a collection of steps constitutes understanding those ideas” (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2000, p.225).

“Students should explore fewer topics in depth, not skim many superficially” (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.117)

b. Broad Curriculum

*increases brain capacity, fosters high levels of interest, decreases discipline problems, engages the right side and the left side of the brain*

Students experience ideas and relationships through a broad curriculum offered to all students. There is no tracking- no general education, no college prep and no honors course of study. The arts and PE are not stricken from the curriculum because of testing pressure. Instead, the arts and other right-brained types of activities are increased because they improve the left side of the brain’s capacity to learn. Thus, all students study and participate in literature, algebra, piano, sports, chemistry, instrumental instruction, painting, worldviews, politics, drama, etc. Since



the lessons are short, many different subjects and ideas are studied in a day, bringing rigor, challenge, and delight to all. (Please see the Relational Curriculum piece in the appendices for more details.)

Research:

- Complex environments produce smarter brains than do boring environments.

Implications: provide lots of variety in classroom activities; offer students new challenges every day. David Sousa, Ed.D

- Bottoms, G., Presson, A., & Johnson, M. (1992). Making high schools work through integration of academic and vocational education. Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board.

- The Arts: Students with high levels of arts participation outperform “arts poor” students by virtually every measure. Learning in arts has significant effects on learning in other domains. Research suggests a dynamic model in which learning in one domain supports and stimulates learning in a complex web of influence described as “a constellation.” Engagement in the arts nurtures the development of cognitive, social, and personal competencies. High arts participation makes a more significant difference to students from low-income backgrounds than for high-income students. To the researchers’ surprise, however, the youth in the arts after school programs were doing the best. (collection of studies collectively entitled *The Impact of the Arts on Learning*)

- Sacrificing physical education for classroom time does not improve academic performance.

- On several test scores, students with enhanced PE performed better than students in control groups. -Sallis JF, McKenzie TL, Kolody B, Lewis M, Marshall S, Rosengard P. Effects of health-related physical education on academic achievement: Project SPARK. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 1999;70:127-134.

- c. Whole. Engaging Books and Hands-on Learning across the Curriculum  
*motivates, provides rich vocabulary, encourages exploration and imagination, fosters moral and rational judgments*

In the CMI relational curriculum, the best books of a literary, narrative nature and of the most intricate exciting language on a subject are selected. These books are then cross-checked to ensure that they align with state standards, and are diverse and inclusive in nature. At an early age, the best books are read aloud to young students and this continues through high school. Children and young adults respond best to stories that clothe facts with their informing big ideas and not dry tidbits of information. Ideas are also related to through real things. Students need to touch and create things, especially in the maths and sciences.

Research:

- “Science study should involve doing science, that is, questioning and discovering- not just covering material” (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.111).

- Marie Clay promotes “emergent literacy behaviors and the reading of good literature to children” (Gambrell, Morrow and Pressley 2007, p.61).

- Literature motivates, provides rich vocabulary for learning, and suggests a variety of concepts to explore.” Wilson, Martens, Arya and Altwerger p.242 2004 Wilson, G.P., et al. (2004). Readers, Instruction, and the NRP. *Kappan*, 86(3), 242-246.
- “Human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures.” (Theodore Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology*, 1986, p.8)
- A well-exercised imagination is crucial to making moral and rational judgments. Both ethics and logic assume imagination as a starting point. Those who lack a dynamic imagination will never be able to grow into mature wisdom. They will always be stuck in very narrow, self-centered mental grooves, following infantile rules..... And we learn to exercise our imaginations in stories—fiction and fantasy and fairy tales most tellingly. (Doug Jones, *Credenda Agenda*, Imaginative Succession, Vol. 13, Issue 2, 2007, Poetics)
- “The study of narrative and the use of stories in the work of educators is a growing phenomenon (Carter, 1993; Jalongo, 1992, Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Narratives or stories are central to our lives in that ‘the stories we hear and the stories we tell shape the meaning and texture of our lives at every stage and juncture’” (Cooper, 1995, p.121 , editors Lambert et al).
- In their study of instruction, Michael Pressley and his colleagues identified the following characteristics of instruction by exemplary first grade teachers: literature is emphasized, there is much reading and writing... connections are made across the curriculum throughout the day...” (Wilson et al., 2004, p.245).

d. Outdoor Life

*strengthens on-task behavior in class, increases student achievement, test results and physical health*

Some say that children are growing up with Nature Deficit Disorder. Typically, while in school, students learn about life inside the classroom, even though most of life occurs outside the schoolhouse. However, students in a Relational school spend a great deal of time out of doors:

- in nature through nature walks and outdoor lunches,
- at play during break and recess,
- sitting on blankets or at picnic tables for various classes on clear days,
- and in the community through field studies and service projects.

A focus on the benefits of outdoor life has been the attention of government officials in recent years, who also recognize the importance of being outdoors for children. The No Child Left Inside movement was introduced into the House of Representatives in 2009. A second bill was also proposed in 2013. On December 10, 2015 - President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act, which contains the provisions included in the No Child Left Inside Act.

Research:

-Jarrett OS, Maxwell DM, Dickerson C, Hoge P, Davies G, Yetley A. Impact of recess on classroom behavior: group effects and individual differences.

-*The Journal of Educational Research* 1998;92:121-126 "For both the students who will study and use science in their careers and for all students who need to be well-informed citizens, the broad goal of a school science program should be to foster understanding, interest, and appreciation of the world in which we live" (Zemelman, et al, 1998, p.111).

-Reduction of Diseases by Being Outside Recent studies show that about 70% of US children (persons under 21) are not getting enough Vitamin D, a vitamin developed in the body when in the sunshine. Low Vitamin D often results in high or low blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular disease as well as different cancers. *Journal of Pediatrics*, Dr. Michal Melamed of Albert Einstein College of Medicine, 2009

-At Naperville Central High School, west of Chicago, children who are having problems with math or reading go to gym class first. And exercise isn't just restricted to the gym -- there are bikes and balls in the classrooms, and the children are in constant motion. The results are amazing -- reading scores have doubled, and math scores are up by a factor of 20. Research shows that after 30 minutes on the treadmill, students solve problems up to 10 percent more effectively. Dr. Mercola's Comments: Keeping kids active at school is a superb way to increase learning, focus and even test results. As many of you reading this have likely experienced, if your mind is feeling cluttered or you're having a mid-afternoon slump, a brisk walk or a quick workout can give you a renewed sense of clarity and focus.

e. Classroom Libraries and a Common Library

*improve reading and literacy acquisition, students become frequent readers, respond enthusiastically to literature, and read for leisure*

Rather than having to go to a separate room or building to choose a book, books are attractively displayed in a corner of the classroom reserved solely for reading. Our classrooms are already home-like to provide a relaxed atmosphere for learning, but the library corner is formed with particular care so that 4-5 children at a time can sit comfortably away from regular classroom activity. Children form their reading habit in the early years, so Dogwood Charter School will have excellent classroom libraries as defined by Morrow, 1985, Morrow & Weinstein, 1982, Routman, 1991, in all elementary classrooms that are filled with books from all genres and subjects and for several reading levels. Regular times for visiting the library corner will be built into the students' days and taking books home to read with family or on one's own will be part of student homework. High school students will have a common reading area lined by shelves full of books rather like a small bookshop with cozy couches, rugs and lamps to provide a quiet, peaceful, beautiful place to read, to study and to find good books. All student libraries will be updated annually.

Research:

- Morrow and Weinstein, "Encouraging Voluntary Reading: The Impact of a Literature Program on Children's Use of Library Centers" *Reading Research Quarterly*, Summer 1986, pp. 330-346. This article basically said that children who have books accessible to them chose to read more often than those who don't.
- Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez and Teale. March 1993. "Let's Not Miss Opportunities to Promote Voluntary Reading: Classroom Libraries in the Elementary School" *The Reading Teacher*, Vol 46, 6, 476.

## 5. Kindergarten

*encourages the growth of children's self-esteem, cultural identities, independence and individual strengths, students develop control of their own behavior with caring adults, students keep their love for learning*

Kindergarten is a time for children to expand their love of learning, their general knowledge, their ability to get along with others, and their interest in reaching out to the world. While kindergarten marks an important transition from preschool to the primary grades, it is important that children still get to be children - getting kindergarteners ready for elementary school does not mean substituting academics for play time or forcing children to master first grade "skills." The Relational Education model creates a kindergarten class that is true to the natural law of learning at this young age. See Appendix A for further explanation.

## 6. Learning Organizational Structure

*students learn to learn, think and dialogue, students become lifelong learners, enhances motivation, improves cognitive and social outcomes in students' learning and an advanced development of student responsibility for self-learning Biggs (1999)*

This structure is a method used by the school to enhance learning. It is a type of instruction of teachers. The school will integrate systems and resources that create a learning organization, as defined by Senge (2006). All adults in this educational community (teachers, leaders, parents and volunteers) are committed to advancing their own learning. The leadership of the school uses the tools, *atmosphere, discipline and life*, to teach and lead the adults. The atmosphere of respect, scaffolding and high expectations free adults to do what they love to do: *learn and make a difference* (Senge, 2006; Ingersoll, 2003). Respectful programs and procedures for teacher development and evaluation include: Japan's Lesson Study Model, 360° Feedback, Fishbowl Protocols and Reflective Practices.

Research:

- Senge, P. (2000). *Schools that learn*. New York: Doubleday.
- Senge, P. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. NY: Random House.
- Takahashi, A., & Yoshida, M. (2004). Ideas for establishing lesson study communities.

*Teaching Children Mathematics*, 10(9), 436.

-Newberg, N., & Glatthorn, A. (1982). *Instructional leadership: Four ethnographic studies on junior high school principals*. (Research and Technical Report No. 143). Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education.

- school communities in which students are truly learning to learn, think, and dialogue are communities of learners (Barth, 1990), learning communities (Sergiovanni, 1992), or learning organizations (Senge, 2000).

-Daresh, J. (2007) *Supervision as proactive leadership*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press

-Glickman, C. (2002). *Leadership for learning: How to help teachers succeed*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

-Marshall, K. (2005, June). It's time to rethink teacher supervision and evaluation. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 727-735

-According to Schmoker's (1999) work and the research of Rhoton and Shane (2006), when teachers and principals are learners as well as researchers intently learning and studying the art of teaching, their content area, and individual interests, their students are more likely to mirror them in becoming life-long learners and researchers.

-*A Critical Analysis of the Research on Learning to Teach: Making the Case for an Ecological Perspective on Inquiry* (Wideen, Jolie Mayer-Smith, Barbara Moon. Review of Educational Research, Vol. 68, No. 2, 130-178 (1998)

- Peer teaching effects learning contexts and grade levels with all age levels and learning contexts reporting benefits (Parr, Wilson, Godinho & Longaretti, 2004).

- Peer teaching has led to students' improved knowledge about the process of learning (Bruffee, 1999).

## 7. Shared Governance Structure

*higher student achievement and student attendance rates (Blasé and Kirby, 2000), faculty and staff are valued so pupils are then valued which inspires them to want to achieve (Penlington, Kington, and Day, 2008), little inner conflict in school, higher teacher performance, teacher retention and teaching quality (Ingersoll, 2003)*

A Relational School implements a relational governance model as a method because it strengthens teacher instruction. Shared governance frameworks prove to be respectful of teachers' and staff members' human needs and natural laws of learning and working. The adults share the responsibility of leading the school, learning new habits for leadership and followership. (See Appendix A for a detailed explanation of the School's leadership model and more research.)

Research:

-Lambert, L. (2006). Lasting leadership: A study of high capacity schools. *The Educational Forum*, 70, 238-54.

-Ingersoll, R. (2003). *Who controls teachers' work? Power and accountability in America's schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

-Timperley, H. (2009). Distributing leadership to improve outcomes for students. In K. Leithwood, B. Mascall, & T. Strauss (Eds.), *Distributed leadership according to the*

evidence (pp.197-223). New York: Routledge.

-Schein, E. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

-Sergiovanni, T. (2007) The lifeworld of leadership. In *Rethinking leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 145-151.

-Shapiro, Arthur. (2008). *The effective constructivist leader: A guide to the successful*. Lanham,MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

-Spillane, J. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

-Strike, K. (2007). *Ethical leadership in schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

-Moller, G., & Pankake, A. (2006). *Lead with me: A principal's guide to teacher leadership*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, Inc.

- Palestini, R. (2003). *The human touch in educational leadership*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc.

- Sufficient research demonstrates that shared governance practice results in higher student achievement and student attendance rates (Blasé and Kirby, 2000).

-Because faculty and staff are valued, pupils are then valued which inspires them to want to achieve (Penlington, Kington, and Day, 2008).

- Sufficient research demonstrates that shared governance practice results in higher student achievement and student attendance rates.

-A school in which teachers have a substantial amount of control and power in social issues of the school in addition to the academic issues is a school with little inner conflict and high teacher performance and teaching quality (Ingersoll, 2003).

-Harris and Day's research (2003) suggests the establishment of "new models of leadership that locate power with the many rather than the few ...to cope with the unprecedented rate of change in education" (p.97).

### **I.3.D.The school calendar and the hours of the school operation, as per section 1715-A(9)**

The School will follow as closely as possible the same school calendar as the district. This calendar will provide consistency throughout the district to encourage maximum collaboration between the charter school personnel and district members. Hours of operation will closely reflect the hours of operation in existing district schools. However, if there is a need to adjust school hours slightly to simplify transportation issues, the charter school will make these adjustments. For example, if transporting the children dictates that a fifteen-minute adjustment (either delayed or accelerated) is necessary to allow busses to reach various locales, changes to the hours of operation will be made. Please see Appendix I for a projected school calendar.

## **I.4. School Accountability:**

### ***School Evaluation***

#### **I.4.A. The methods of self-assessment or evaluation that will be used to ensure that the school is meeting its stated mission and objectives**

*“If judgments of my work are always external, I will be dependent on the judges, not myself; the judgment needs to be internalized. I need to establish the authority of my own voice, to make judgments about my own work.”*  
-Bena Kallick

One cannot consider school performance without considering individual performance because individual performance influences the overall performance of the school. Additionally, an individual must reflect not only on his/her own performance in isolation but also on the impact of his/her performance on the entire system (the School). In order to sustain innovation, collective learning must be institutionalized. Shifting from an individual focus to a system/school focus requires dialogue.

The use of these simple but powerful tools leads to continuous reflection on evaluation and improvement of the educational program and atmosphere. Following are the practices that structure formative assessment.

##### **1. Accreditation**

Dogwood Charter School will be accredited by the Charlotte Mason Institute. As is discussed in the student evaluation section (Sections I.4.A-C), the CMI program will assess student learning as will the annual standardized tests. It is not enough to use these as summative learning tools that merely rank or label the school as good or poor. These are formative tools that the School's stakeholders will use to inform and improve instruction and curriculum.

##### **1. 360° Feedback**

Innovative philosophies have been deployed in the business community with regard to evaluation and performance. One such innovation is termed 360° feedback, which ensures that feedback is collected from all stakeholders. This practice is valuable to the evaluation process because every stakeholder has a unique and valuable perspective on performance, even if these perspectives apparently seem contradictory. One who truly values multiple perspectives does not view feedback as right/wrong and good/bad, but rather focuses on continual self reflection and improvement based on what they are hearing and reading. In contrast, traditional feedback usually comes down from the top, and therefore, opportunities to derive insight from everyone involved are missed.

##### **2. Reflective Learning Opportunities**

This School intends to systematize the concept of 360° feedback. To deploy this concept, self-assessment is a vital part. Dialogue required for learning is one point of leverage this School will use to create the self/team-reflection process

that is required for program assessment. The system must be modified to encourage and ensure ongoing, meaningful dialogue. Therefore, the system will provide protected, quality time for staff, faculty and parents to come together and collaborate. Such practices include Japan's Lesson Study model, reflective group protocols such as the Fishbowl protocol, volunteer Breakfast Clubs, program development meetings, and Reflective Practices. These guide and scaffold self and team assessment. These structured processes use the School's quantitative AND qualitative assessments such as student exams, narrations, copywork, PSSA scores, and CMI's assessment program; stakeholders' surveys and conversations; 360° feedback forms from consultants and the Charlotte Mason Institute's accreditation process; student and faculty/staff Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs), and parent/teacher/student conferences.

### 3. Program Development Meetings

To this end, faculty, staff and parents (when applicable) will hold *program development* meetings (not to be confused with the collaboration sessions) to reflect on programming, to share concerns and successes, and to brainstorm and create solutions. These meetings will provide the necessary circumstances to generate synergy that currently is not always supported in the traditional school organization and schedule. To ensure program development meetings occur on a regular basis, the school schedule will be modified to fit the needs.

Volunteer staff and faculty choose to attend one of two committees, and volunteer qualified members of those committees lead the meetings and projects. The leaders change according to need, expertise, passion and availability. The purpose of the committees also change yearly according to faculty/staff determined needs. During these times, teachers take part in Lesson Studies, observing and reflecting upon a teacher's lesson. The directors might lead the teams through a reflective practice exercise. The teachers might also use a fishbowl protocol to evaluate a teacher's exam or invite a consultant to share research. The directors attend these meetings to learn as well, and it is their role to create or find and then implement the structures, atmosphere, leadership training, and money that make these meetings doable for teachers.

### 4. Co-Teaching Opportunities

A co-teaching model allows teachers to co-plan and co-present lessons, but most importantly, through the relationship they co-process and co-problem solve, resulting in individual and corporate learning.

### 5. Individual Learning Plans

Adults as well as students will have ILPs that include evaluation components i.e.: goals, criteria, procedures and schedule. The development of faculty and staff ILPs will involve a collaborative process. This process will include a focus on the school's mission to ensure individual goals are tied tightly to the vision of the school. The evaluation of the ILPs is discussed in Section I.4.B.



#### 6. Staff Exchange

We also are discussing opportunities for staff exchange. Staff exchange will come in various forms. Relational teachers from around the nation and world will “swap” placements in various relational schools. “Swapees” become part of their new schools’ staff for a 1 or 2 week time period, providing feedback to the faculty/staff they are visiting. These rotations are strategic in nature because they are designed to ensure new thinking is interjected constantly into the system.

#### 7. University Partnerships

We will create partnerships with local universities where student teachers will participate in the school as interns, learning the pedagogy and taking an active role in the faculty/staff’s innovative reflective, formative assessments.

### **I.4.B How teachers and administrators will be evaluated and the standards for teacher and staff performance**

*“The number one criterion for learning is the generous invitation of feedback.”*

*(Tharp & Gallimore, 1988)*

#### **Relational Assessment of Faculty and Staff Performance:**

Performance evaluation will consist of three critical components:

- (a) a development plan, the Individual Learning Plan (ILP),
- (b) a portfolio, and
- (c) the formal performance assessment.

**Step 1:** In the spring, teachers, administrators and staff, in partnership with colleagues and mentors, develop ILP’s using their portfolios in the Formal Performance Assessment. New teachers develop theirs in the summer or fall.

- An ILP includes goals and objectives of a meaningful nature for the individual and must be aligned with the vision, mission, goals and practices of the School and embody the hiring standards described in Section V.3.A.
- The basic premise of an ILP is that the individual must target goals for him/herself in order to set the stage for meaningful learning to occur; therefore, an ILP *looks to the future*.
- It uses the teacher’s portfolio, a collection of artifacts gathered from surveys, prior ILP evaluation forms, Fish Bowl protocols, Lesson Study and Reflective Practice data to inform the goal setting and action planning. (Step 2)
- The ILP then guides the next Formal Performance Assessment. (Steps 3 & 4)

**Step 2:** Throughout the year, all participate in the various reflective, learning opportunities, collect the data and forms as artifacts, and collate the artifacts into individual portfolios.

**Step 3:** The ILP's are revisited midyear by each individual for the purpose of incorporating new ideas and practices along the way. This is one of the two formal performance assessments of the year.

**Step 4:** Start the process over with Step 1 in the spring. Following a set period of time, a formal performance assessment takes place for each individual; therefore, assessment within this context *takes on a historical perspective*:

- o Formal performance assessment will be based on the goals set forth in the ILP.
- o Employee's performance (in relation to the previous year's ILP) will be assessed and will thus guide the employee's goals for the following year.
- o Implementing a robust evaluation program requires feedback from a variety of sources. Within the 360<sup>0</sup> Feedback model, feedback for ILP development and assessment purposes will come from the following sources:
  - Colleagues
  - Parents
  - Mentor/Coach
  - Community volunteers
  - Supervisor/Directors
  - Students
  - Board Members
  - Consultants

The staff will develop specific measurement criteria for employee assessment prior to school opening. However, the following general categories will exist and influence decisions related to merit increases as described in Section V.3.D.

#### Meeting Goals

- *Exceeds Goals* represents performance that consistently exceeds performance expectations by a significant degree while overcoming exceptional challenges or applying unique solutions.
- *Meets Goals* represent performance that consistently meets performance expectations.

#### Not Meeting Goals

- *Most/Some Goals* represent performance that inconsistently meets performance expectations.
- *Few Goals* represents performance that consistently does not meet performance expectations.

### **I.4.C. How the School will be held accountable to the parents of the children attending the school**

Ongoing dialogue among parents, teachers, consultants and the administration is crucial. We will gain significant leverage by changing the organizational system to allow ongoing dialogue among everyone to flourish, resulting in improved

accountability to parents.

1.) The following ongoing mechanisms will be implemented:

- ***Collaboration sessions*** everyone with the school will be encouraged to attend. This vehicle is viewed as a strategic change to the organizational system, one that will encourage ongoing dialogue and a continuous effort to reflect and improve on an individual basis and collectively at the program level. The purpose of these meetings is not only to identify needed changes but also to identify, share, analyze and celebrate successes. These evening collaborations will be held with parents, professionals and community members to ensure that schedules of working parents are accommodated. (To accommodate everyone involved, adjustments to this schedule may be necessary over time.) These collaboration sessions will provide time for individual conferencing between parents and their children's teachers and group collaboration among all stakeholders.
- ***Coordinated voice or e-mail*** communication will be available to parents and professionals. The teachers and staff will be in dialogue about positive and productive means of using email and the school's website to communicate with parents.
- ***Bulletins and Monthly Newsletters***
- ***Opportunities for Dialogue*** will present themselves at the School during times of volunteering, book clubs, learning opportunities, and Work Days.
- ***Composition of the Board of Trustees*** will include parents.
- ***Every parent will be contacted*** by phone or email each trimester by their child's teacher to discuss how their child is progressing and develop strategies for the future. Furthermore, student, parent, teacher collaborations will take place at the end of each trimester to discuss the student's progress and needs.

2) Coupled with the above-mentioned strategies, the school also will be held accountable to parents through the following mechanisms:

- ***Systematic, periodic reviews*** will be implemented. Such reviews will include evaluation forms that embody founding principles of the School and school goals/outcomes. Parents will be asked to fill out the evaluation throughout the year; and at monthly collaboration sessions, there will be time for follow up discussions.
- ***All volunteers***, who are likely to be composed primarily of parents, will be asked to identify what is working well and to make suggestions for improving the educational programming in general and/or specifically for their children.

- 3) It also is important for staff to encourage timely feedback from the children. This mechanism allows the children to share their own ideas and encourages them to think critically. It also informs staff and teacher practice, and relationships are built with the children.

At the Village School of Gaffney, SC, a veteran middle school science teacher began to use the relational practices as presented by CMI. Here is the story of her reflective practice and practitioner research:

At the end of the first week of school, Linda wanted to get some feedback from the children because she was finding it difficult to let go of the control she was accustomed to and was considering going back to her old ways. Here are some of the things the children said when asked, "What do you think about the way we are doing things this year?"

- "I like that we are reading the books for ourselves this year. I understand it better when I don't have to listen to someone else read."
- "I really like studying geography with our novels. Before, I always wondered where the settings were. Now I can understand more about the characters because I know where they live."
- "I like our new science books because they don't leave out all the good parts." (She moved from a textbook to a series that includes stories about scientists and is written in narrative form.)
- "I like learning about history through stories because I remember it better."
- "The day goes by so fast!"

Linda came to me after this reflective sharing time and said, "You know, I was really anxious this time last week. But I *feel good* about this year now. It has been hard for me to relinquish my control, but the kids are really happy, and they are learning deeply. I can't get over how much they seem to really like school! (J. Spencer, personal communication, August 25, 2009).

This type of regularly scheduled student feedback will be the norm rather than the exception. The program development meetings and the teacher's own scheduling will allow for reflective practices and protocols which guide the process of gathering student feedback.

#### **I.4.D. The plan for regular review of school budgets and financial records**

The School Law of Pennsylvania requires that public school districts approve an annual budget for the operation of the General and Special Revenue Funds prior to the start of the fiscal year (July 1). This budget will be made available for public inspection.

As stated in the Bylaws, once a year, the school budget and financial records will be reviewed at pre-announced board meetings. In addition, budget reviews will be

performed mid-way through the fiscal year. These meetings will be open to the public. This practice will ensure that all stakeholders are informed of financial issues. Additionally, parents will be a part of the Board of Trustees. This composition ensures parents are included not only in the *review* of financial information but also in the *development* of financial plans.

A budget must be approved by June 30 for the fiscal year beginning July 1 and ending June 30 the subsequent year. Expenditures cannot exceed the budget by function and object during the fiscal year without Board approval, and actual total expenditures may not exceed the total budgeted expenditures for the year. The school will retain Charter Choices, a Business Services provider with nearly 20 years' expertise in charter school finance, to assist in the budgeting process and coordinate submission of the PDE-2028 to the State each fiscal year.

An annual external audit will be performed by a qualified CPA/audit firm at the conclusion of the initial year of operation and each year thereafter.

#### **I.4.E. Description of the School's system for maintaining school records and disseminating information as required under the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)**

Founders of Dogwood Charter School understand that, under FERPA, schools must generally afford parents the following:

- access to their children's education records,
- an opportunity to seek to have the records amended, and
- some control over the disclosure of information from the records.

Parents may access, seek to amend or consent to disclosures of their children's education records, unless there is a court order or other legal document specifically stating otherwise. When a student turns 18 years of age or attends a postsecondary institution, the student, and not the parent, may access, seek to amend, and consent to disclosures of his or her education records.

#### **Access to Education Records**

To comply with FERPA, Dogwood Charter School will provide parents with access to their child's education records by:

- providing a parent with an opportunity to inspect and review his or her child's education records within 45 days of the receipt of a request,
- providing a parent with copies of education records or otherwise making the records available to the parent if the parent, for instance, lives outside of commuting distance of the school, and
- extracting the names and other personally identifiable information about other students that may be included in the child's education records.

### **Amendment of Education Records**

To comply with FERPA, Dogwood Charter School will:

- consider a request from a parent to amend inaccurate or misleading information in the child's education records,
- offer the parent a hearing on the matter if it decides not to amend the records in accordance with the request, and
- offer the parent a right to place a statement to be kept and disclosed with the record if, as a result of the hearing, the school still decides not to amend the record.

Under FERPA, a school is not required to consider the following requests for amendment:

- Seek to change a grade or disciplinary decision
- Seek to change the opinions or reflections of a school official or other person reflected in an education record
- Seek to change a determination with respect to a child's status under special education programs

### **Disclosure of Education Records**

To comply with FERPA, Dogwood Charter School will:

- have a parent's consent prior to the disclosure of education records, and
- ensure that the consent is signed and dated and states the purpose of the disclosure.

However, Dogwood Charter School *may* disclose education records without consent when:

- the disclosure is to school officials who have been determined to have legitimate educational interests as set forth in the school district's annual notification of rights to parents,
- the student is seeking or intending to enroll in another school,
- the disclosure is to state or local educational authorities auditing or evaluating Federal or State supported education programs or enforcing Federal laws which relate to those programs,
- the disclosure is pursuant to a lawfully issued court order or subpoena, and
- the information disclosed has been appropriately designated as directory information by the school.

### **Annual Notification**

Each year, Dogwood Charter School will notify parents of enrolled students that the school must allow parents to do the following:

- Inspect and review their children's education records
- Seek amendment of inaccurate or misleading information in their children's education records
- Consent to most disclosures of personally identifiable information from education records

The annual notice will also include:

- Information for a parent to file a complaint of an alleged violation with the Federal Policy Compliance Office (FPCO)
- A description of who is considered to be a school official and what is considered to be a legitimate educational interest so that information may be shared with that person
- Information about who to contact to seek access or amendment of education records

This notification to parents will be posted in the Student Handbook and will be available on the school's website.

#### **I.4.F. The School's system for maintaining accurate student enrollment information as required under section 1730-A, Enrollment and Notification**

Dogwood Charter School recognizes that charter school funding is based on enrollment; therefore, an accurate child count is necessary.

The School will develop a system for maintaining up-to-date student enrollment data, which will be essential in completing the required Pennsylvania Department of Education and School District child accounting forms (including, but not limited to, the PPS STARS System, PDE-3059CS Instructional Time Summary, PDE-30262C Annual Attendance Membership Report, and PDE-3002CS Summary Report of Aggregate Days Membership).

The School will maintain accurate records, which will include the basic data for each student that is needed to complete child accounting forms and other student data forms to be submitted to the Department of Education. This basic data includes the following:

- Student name
- Names and addresses of parents or legal guardians
- Resident status of student
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Ethnic code
- Grade level
- Entry code
- Entry date
- Withdrawal code
- Withdrawal date
- Exceptionality code

Dogwood Charter School also intends to use a student information software system, such as Skyward, to track enrollment data to make sure that enrollment figures are always up-to-date and reflecting new students and any withdrawals.

The District Billing team at Charter Choices (the school's Business Manager) will also assist in maintaining accurate student counts and monthly reconciliations for the purposes of

timely and accurate invoicing of each school district on behalf of DCS.

DCS will budget for and utilize our software to allow it to record student, staff, and school data electronically.

This system will record information including but not limited to:

- 1) Student basic data – name, student number, address, phone, guardian information, family income and education level, home language of dominance
- 2) Attendance data
- 3) CMI assessment data, DIBELS/IDEL, AIMSweb, PSSA, DRA/EDL scores indexed by student
- 4) Staff basic data – name, address, phone, email, certification and endorsements
- 5) School basic data – 20- and 40-day counts, energy consumption data, etc.

The student information system selected will allow a variety of reports to be prepared and printed from this data, including reports for the authorizer, for school reports required by the state, and for our partners and funders. A well-functioning system will allow DCS to promptly submit to the state any budget adjustment requests made necessary by changing student enrollment.

Based on this data, Dogwood Charter School will notify the student's school district of residence within 15 days of enrollment through the use of the Notification Form developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Dogwood Charter School will also mail each affected school district (and any other district that so requests) a copy of the Dogwood Charter School charter, charter application and annual reports. Should a dispute arise with the school district of residence over the child's residency, the Dogwood Charter School will work with the school district and PDE to ensure that the resolution process outlined in Section 1730-A is followed.

The District Billing team at Charter Choices (the school's Business Manager) will also assist in maintaining accurate student counts and monthly reconciliations for the purposes of timely and accurate invoicing of each school district on behalf of DCS.

#### ***1.4. Student Evaluation***

##### **1.4.A. The School's plans to evaluate student performance**

##### **1.4.B. How student development towards the School's overall learning goals and objectives will be measured**

(A and B are integrated below.)

Dogwood Charter School has developed its curriculum and instruction with high standards and expectations. With this in mind, the goal of assessment is to show the growth of an internally motivated and self-directed learner that has many relationships with the world about her/him: other humans including family, community, and the



larger human family and history, and the arts; nature, the environment, and the sciences; an interest in other cultures and peoples, their languages, and stories; as well as our own stories in literature and history. In order to help a child live in a world that is increasingly pluralistic, children must understand the importance of relationships and value those relationships, while at the same time appreciating and adhering to the values within their own culture.

With these goals and standards in mind, assessment in a relational school is based on a rich, broad and deep curriculum. It is also done *with a child*, not just *to the child*. *With the child* implies that we are seeking to help the child master his/her understanding of the world. Hence, the reason for Dogwood's determination to help students become self-directed, complex thinkers who communicate well and care about their world. Bena Kallick (2008) says it this way: "*If judgments of my work are always external, I will be dependent on the judges, not myself. The judgment needs to be internalized. I need to establish the authority of my own voice, to make judgments about my own work.*"

Dogwood Charter School will evaluate student knowledge of content in the following manner.

1. Teachers assess students daily *for learning*. This is a formative *assessment* that the teacher does daily. They become a daily "child watcher" looking for ways to understand what the child knows and how to help the child internalize his/her own learning and self-reflections. These formative assessments are kept in notebooks and completed through dictations, narrations, and other means that give teachers a window into the child's mind.
2. At the end of each term, teachers do an assessment *of learning*. The assessment of learning is completed in the following manner: (a.) There are three yearly terms of 12 weeks each. During the last week of the term teachers and administrators work together to write examination questions. These questions are developed in the pattern of essential questions used by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe in their book *Understanding by Design*. (b.) During the last week of the term at the regularly scheduled class time, students respond to these questions. (c.) Teachers will develop rubrics to score the student responses, and assessments will be developed using the rubrics.
3. Parent/teacher/student conferences will be held with each parent to review the results of the examinations as well as the notebooks, copywork, dictation and other means of formative and summative assessment.
4. Each term a limited number of randomly selected student examinations will be forwarded to The Charlotte Mason Institute. A group of trained university professors will score these student examinations much like what is done through International Baccalaureate schools, except in this case it will be done throughout the school grades/forms. The random selection of student examinations will be done by the

Charlotte Mason Institute or through a computer program. Selections will not be made by the school.

5. From the following criteria, teachers will develop rubrics to help measure the performance of students:

#### EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR

The Effective Communicator comprehends and uses words, pictures, styles and symbols for creating, conveying and processing thoughts in all learning areas.

- Demonstrates progress in his / her reading, writing, speaking, visual expression and kinesthetic skills in all learning areas
- Organizes and conveys feelings, ideas and information appropriate for purposes and audiences
- Receives, comprehends, interprets and responds to verbal and non-verbal information and messages
- Communicates in a wide variety of media with clarity, engagement and personal style
- Demonstrates the accepting, supporting behaviors of an active listener and contributor with an open, focused and inquisitive mind
- Recognizes, respects and explores the unique benefits of diversity in methods of communication and languages

#### COMMUNITY AND GLOBAL CONTRIBUTOR

The community and global contributor will demonstrate an appreciation and respect for diverse populations. The contributor will compare the roles of cultures and the arts that enrich both the individual and society.

- Demonstrates knowledge of his / her community / culture and other diverse communities and cultures
- Provides services to the community
- Reflects on his / her role as a community contributor
- Examines ways culture and the arts reflect history, beliefs and traditions
- Understands the interdependence of people and takes responsibility for the preservation of the local and world environments

#### SELF-DIRECTED LEARNER / WORKER

The self-directed learner will be an independent worker, willing to take risks, overcome new challenges, build a foundation of knowledge, skills and attitudes and constantly self-reflect.

- Demonstrates positive attitudes toward learning, personal well being and self esteem
- Accepts responsibility for his/her actions
- Sets goals and makes plans to attain them
- Uses questions, imagination, reflection and research to learn and interpret information differently
- Monitors, records, and evaluates progress toward personal and learning goals and outcomes

- Honors and practice “special habits of mind” for each discipline when engaged in integrated collaborative learning/assessment units

## COMPLEX THINKER

The complex thinker will demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills and strategies of decision making and problem-solving in all curriculum areas

- DEMONSTRATES CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS:
  - Applies, analyzes, synthesizes, and evaluates all types of information, including technology
  - Identifies cause and effect relationships
  - Recognizes his/her own and other's assumptions
  - Draws inferences and uses analogies
- DEMONSTRATES CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS:
  - Uses curiosity and imagination to expand upon existing concepts by integrating original ideas
  - Seeks unconventional alternatives
  - Take risks in pursuing plans and ideas
  - Integrates seemingly unrelated ideas
- DECISION MAKING
  - Recognizes that a problem exists and demonstrates the ability to establish criteria
  - Asks good probing questions
  - Tests possible solutions
  - Makes decisions based on those criteria
- PROBLEM SOLVING
  - Needs to define problems before solving
  - Consults resources and gathers a wide range of information
  - Uses information and skills from previous experiences
  - Draws logical conclusions from available information
  - Makes predictions related to the future

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNER

The collaborative learner will demonstrate a willingness to work cooperatively with others in problem solving, decision making, listening, sharing opinions, negotiating compromises, and helping a group to pursue and achieve individual and group goals and outcomes.

- Openly accepts praise, constructive criticism and individual differences as a functioning group member
- Evaluates and monitors one's own behavior within the group
- Demonstrates responsibility as a contributing team leader and quality worker in meeting the group's goals and outcomes
- Identifies verbal and nonverbal information by demonstrating interactive and

- effective communication skills with others
- Applies appropriate problem solving skills in the decision making process of the group

Students' development towards the school's overall goals and objectives is measured by end of term examinations with performance indicators as described above. Further, students will be assessed using the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment and the CMI assessment program.

#### **I.4.C. How student evaluation will be used to improve student achievement and attain the stated learning objectives**

##### **1. Assessment for Learning**

*Assessment for learning* is key to students' continued learning and growth. James Popham in his book, *The Truth about Testing: An Educator's Call to Action*, says, "Use diverse types of classroom assessments to clarify the nature of any learning outcome you seek" (2001, p 111). Further, Wise, Sevcik, Morris, Lovett & Wolf (2007) indicate the following: "Keeping the study's limitations in consideration, the findings from this study were largely consistent with a large body of research indicating that oral language skills are related to reading achievement" (Cooper et al., 2002; Olofsson & Niedersøe, 1999; Scarborough, 1990).

This study, however, provided unique evidence that receptive and expressive vocabulary knowledge were independently related to pre-reading skills, *whereas only expressive vocabulary knowledge* (emphasis ours) was related to word identification abilities. Findings suggest that receptive and expressive vocabulary knowledge relate to pre-reading skills in differential ways because of the nature of each type of knowledge. Further, those children with better definitional knowledge may have an advantage in identifying words because of more thoroughly represented semantic knowledge. Finally, results from this study indicate that better listening comprehension skills facilitate word identification. Dogwood Charter School seeks to improve student achievement and gain the learning objectives of the school by using various forms of formative and summative assessments, paying particular attention to the use of oral or expressive language and the development of listening skills.

##### **2. Assessment Practices**

###### **Daily and Weekly Assessments**

Listed here are some practices that will be done on a daily and weekly basis which will provide the teacher opportunities for assessing student work.

*Daily oral and/or written narrations* (in all content areas: literature, history, art, etc.) Narrations (specialized retellings) are crucial for developing vocabulary, expression, listening skills, and comprehension.

*Weekly dictations* – Develops the habits of spelling well by paying attention to words,

their parts, and how words are put together

*Weekly recitations* – Increase oral and written language by patterning the best writers our culture has to offer, thus improving speaking skills

*Essays* (years 5, 6, 7, and 8) – Develops the ability to outline, sequence, and follow an argument and express oneself well

*Problem solving in mathematics* – Listening, observing, following a pattern and following an argument to an end all help students become better problem solvers. Narration helps further by helping students sequence what is said.

*Computation in mathematics* – As problem-solving skills are developed, computation in mathematics can be accomplished by following a pattern, a sequence.

*Weekly notebooks* (journals) – The self directed learner must become a self-reflective learner. Notebooks and journals provide an opportunity for self-expression and a place for teacher and student to track the learning that has occurred.

*Daily Word Study* (contextualized phonics and spelling) – For young children, the patterns and sound-symbol relationship in words are crucial for children to begin to be able to make meaning of the word patterns on the page in front of them.

The tools above will be used to evaluate constantly the work of students to improve student achievement and to attain the stated learning objectives. These are not only ways to assess learning, but they are also ways to assess *for* learning.

Oral language as indicated by Wise, et al. is a window into the language development of young children as well as a window into their future language abilities such as reading, writing and listening. Therefore, oral language is encouraged from kindergarten on as a means to increase children's language development and as a means to inform teachers on a daily basis how students are making progress and how they are thinking. Narrations of content are done daily orally and in writing as well as pictorially and dramatically. Students who are not yet writing have adult records at the end of the term to provide a written window into their understanding and their language development. Records are kept weekly in all the areas mentioned above. Portfolios of students' work will be kept on a weekly basis. The weekly portfolio of student work will be used by teachers to assess the instructional needs of students and to inform parents

### **3. Assessment of Learning**

At the end of a term the following areas may be assessed through open-ended exam questions:

Histories

History of the country (American History)

One Supporting history: Mexican, Canadian and Personal

- General History
- Natural History
- Two Foreign Languages
- Mathematics
  - Arithmetic
  - Geometry
  - Algebra
  - Others
- Science
  - Nature Study
  - A natural science: (biology, earth science, chemistry, environmental studies, others)
- Music
  - Composer study
  - Music theory and practice
  - Chorus
  - Instrumental
- Art
  - Picture Study
  - Drawing
  - Artist Study
  - Painting
- Language Arts
  - Literature
  - Composition
  - Grammar
  - Handwriting
  - Dictation
- Civics
  - Geography
  - Citizenship
- Physical Education
  - Health/PE/Nutrition
- Performing Arts
  - Theatre
  - Dance

**Restatement of the various types of assessments at Dogwood Charter School:**

Students will be assessed daily and weekly using the types of formative assessments mentioned above (e.g., narrations, dictations, essays, etc.). Assessment of learning or summative assessments will be done at the end of each term, with three terms a year. The CMI assessment program will be used, as will the PSSA at the designated time specified by the state of Pennsylvania. All of these assessments will be used to improve student achievement.

#### 4. Chart of Relational Assessment

The chart below provides insight into how assessments and evaluations will be used to improve student achievement. It is not a final list of assessment tools at Dogwood Charter School, but is intended to give the reader a window into the means by which Dogwood will improve student achievement.

***Chart of Sample Assessments at Dogwood Charter School***

<b>Type of Assessment</b>	<b>Frequency of Assessment</b>	<b>What is assessed?</b>	<b>How it will be used to improve Student Achievement</b>	<b>Research and Comments</b>
<b>Oral and Written Narrations (along with illustrated and dramatic narrations)</b>	Daily	To assess vocabulary development (oral and written) To assess comprehension (oral and written) To assess spelling (written) To assess sentence structure (oral and written) To assess ability to sequence a story (oral and written) To assess development of grammar (oral and written)	Teachers will daily listen for the concepts listed under What is assessed? As students narrate both orally and in writing, teachers monitor the students' development by keeping individual notebooks on each child and constantly listening for vocabulary development, along with the other skills. Rubrics and checklists to measure these skills will be developed by the teachers.	Quality text on checklists and rubrics and how to create them are readily available to schools today. CMI will provide teachers training. Oral and written narrations are the beginning source of students' compositions.
<b>Dictations</b>	Weekly	To assess spelling development, listening and observation skills	Students' ability to spell will be monitored through dictations as well as narrations. These will be used by teachers to help students improve their spelling and listening skills, thus comprehension skills and observation skills.	See: Brown and Cambourne's (1987) work on retelling in <i>Read and Retell</i> ; Isbell's (2002) effectiveness of children telling stories; Benson and Cummins (2000) <i>The Power of Retelling</i> ; Reedy and Lister (2007) <i>Literacy</i> .
<b>Recitations</b>	Weekly	To assess memory skills, observation skills and speaking skills	To help teachers watch for vocabulary development, proper sequencing of words, sentence structure and patterns and comprehension	Recitations of beautiful language in the form of prose or poetry
<b>Essays</b>	Twice a Month	To assess skills of analysis, critical thinking, reflective thinking, sequencing and logically following an argument	As teachers use a checklist or rubric to measure students' progress, they can also work with students on areas for improvement.	

<b>Problem Solving in mathematics</b>	Daily	To assess sequencing abilities, comprehension, vocabulary, numeracy, logical thinking and transfer of learning	Math is a huge problem area in child development. Teachers can monitor and analyze student progress by checking their ability to sequence the problems, to comprehend, and to think logically about the problems. Further, teachers can monitor whether or not students can transfer their knowledge to various types of problems and situations.	Use of: -Japan's Zone of Proximal Development Mathematical Learning Model -Integrated Math Program (IMP)
<b>Computation in mathematics</b>	Daily	To assess following instructions, following a logical pattern/argument, sequencing, vocabulary and applying language	Being able to follow a pattern of work, use vocabulary properly, sequence properly and follow an argument are all ways teachers can use computation to improve student achievement.	Use of: -Japan's Zone of Proximal Development Mathematical Learning Model -Integrated Math Program (IMP)
<b>Notebooks</b>	Weekly	To assess reflective thinking, comprehension, vocabulary, analytical skills, critical thinking, self-direction, spelling and observation skills	Writing helps a teacher see what children are thinking. Journals done properly give a teacher a window into a child's mind, thereby it gives teachers the opportunity to help children correct incorrect or poor thinking.	
<b>Word Study</b>	Daily	To assess word analysis skills, word segmentation skills, word automaticity and observation skills	Students will improve reading comprehension by gaining their own power over words. Teachers can use word study as a means to monitor students' growth in word power.	Use of <i>Words Their Way</i> by Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, Johnston
<b>End of Term Examinations</b>	Every three months (three times a year)	To assess student content knowledge, to inform teacher and parents, to direct instruction of the teacher and by the teacher	The end of term examinations will be used to monitor student achievement over all. Teachers can use these examinations to check for various skills, understandings and knowledge.	Created and assessed by teachers with random assessment by CMI
<b>PSSA and Keystone Exams</b>	As stated by PDE	To look for weaknesses in instruction and for weaknesses in student learning in any content area assessed	State tests can be used to analyze student strengths and weaknesses in the various skills sets, content knowledge and overall.	Created and measured by the State of PA.

## 5. Data Informed Decision Making

In addition to increasing student achievement and meeting stated learning objectives, student assessments will be used to close the achievement gap between races and classes, foster joy in learning and living, and develop habits for learning and full living.



The authentic assessment data, the results from the Charlotte Mason Institute's evaluations and the state standardized test scores assist both students and teachers. Students use their contextual analysis charts (for habit formation) and teacher/parent/student conferences to guide reflections on their data and to set goals.

The School staff and faculty will gather to understand and evaluate the data to inform decision making as they evaluate and understand the areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. The data and new understandings will then inform future professional learning, hiring, curricular choices, scheduling, spending and anything else that affects those outcomes.

These practices will guide the data driven decision making:

- Faculty group protocols and lesson studies
- Reflective practices
- Consultations from CMI, teachers and staff, as well as parents and students when appropriate
- Action plans that will be formulated by faculty teams, in the same fashion as an ILP (Individualized Learning Plan)

## **I.5.School Community**

### **I.5.A. The relationship of the School with the surrounding community**

The relationship between this school and the surrounding community reaches to the core of the school's philosophy, mission, and goal. This core involves children and adults in a learning environment where meaningful, real life experiences occur and relationships flourish. Students and adults will not only value who they are, but also value where they come from (the community), and bring meaningful value to the community and the world. The relationship between the school and the community will grow and flourish in these crucial ways:

1. Community members will come into the school to participate in the learning environment to lead classroom activities, to import their own experiences and to help students extend their skills, knowledge, and relationships. Community members who participate in this school will be required to attend an orientation training to ensure meaningful and appropriate interactions. All adults who interact with children as part of the program will be required to provide the school with a completed Criminal History Record Information (Pennsylvania residents) and the completed, original Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal History Record (fingerprints), as well as completed, original Child Abuse History Clearance.
2. Students and adults will visit the community in field studies. To value their community, persons need to know their community. Therefore, out in the field, students and adults will study the community's history, natural environment, government, service agencies, economics, organizations, influential persons, monuments, and higher education.

3. Many of the School's activities will involve community service projects because they will witness and become familiar with the needs of the community from their field studies, and thus will care about the community and want to make a difference. Having children participate in activities that sustain the community gives children an opportunity to have "real life" impact on their own environments and further develop relationship skills and build empathy for others and the world around them. It also prepares them for participating in a broader range of activities that sustain the community and environment later in life.
4. Students in the higher grades, Years Eleven and Twelve, will participate in internship programs that require them to work in the community, allowing them to contemplate their futures, practice their gifts, and experience the realities of the workplace. Dogwood Charter School plans to build relationships and partner with members of the community including business owners, professionals, and educators.
5. The School will host school-wide "lesson studies" for student teachers, educators, professors and researchers from universities around the nation. Dogwood Charter School has connections to Duquesne University with Professor Elizabeth Cochran and Frances McAleer with Brandman University, CA. Both will help facilitate relationships to organize "lesson studies" with local experts and professors to come into the school and expose the students to new topics of study.

#### **I.5.B. Description of the nature and extent of parent involvement in the school's mission**

Parents/guardians (and community members) are considered instrumental to the school's success. The overarching mission of the school is to create a learning community for *everyone* involved, including parents. All adults in the students' lives need to model learning. To this end, a number of vehicles have been woven into the system to ensure maximum involvement from parents/guardians.

1. In the early phases, before the school opens, all parents, grandparents, and guardians who wish to be Founding Members must meet certain requirements. Two requirements stress learning and understanding the school's relational pedagogy, thus parents, grandparents, and guardians seeking status as a Founding Member must attend at least one Founding Members Meeting and read a synopsis of the philosophy.
2. Parents and staff will collaborate to develop an orientation/training program that every person who participates in the school environment will be required to complete successfully. This program will ensure that every person actively involved with the school understands the school environment and its goals and mission, thus enabling them to enrich the learning environment for the students. The inclusion of non-certified adults requires that the role of the

professional teacher shift from one who interacts primarily with students to one who interacts extensively with and supports all adults who participate in the school environment.

3. Parents will be welcomed at all times by appointment, which ensures safety and proper relations between all stakeholders. Certain guidelines of participation and observation will be explained and expected in the classroom and school. It must be understood that parents are ALWAYS welcome, though. Appointments and guidelines will not be used to hinder or dissuade parent involvement. policy will not cause disruption to the learning process because the Lesson Study practice (the School's primary professional development strategy) requires visitors and observation, so the students and teachers will be accustomed to observers. Relational learning requires participation from parents and community members who are not employed by the school. Additionally, the collaboration sessions, which are facilitated by the School's directors, will give every parent an opportunity to participate regularly and actively in the school house.
4. Parents and guardians, as well as members of the community, will be invited to join the book clubs, classes, and social events sponsored by the School. The School will also have "Work Days" in which volunteers and parents maintain the facility together.
5. The Directors will coordinate parent and community involvement. Intentionality and structure ensure meaningful and highly integrated participation in all school activities, on and off the school campus.
6. Any parent or guardian who enters the building must complete and present all required and updated clearances designated by Pennsylvania Department of Education.

#### **I.5.C. Description of the procedures established to review complaints of parents regarding operation of the School**

Where applicable by law, parents and students will be informed of the due process rights afforded them by federal and state regulations; all due process rights will be honored at the School. Procedures to review additional complaints from parents are as follows:

1. The many mechanisms (e.g., collaboration sessions, voicemail, and email) for ongoing dialogue will be the first step for parents/guardians to discuss grievance issues with their child's teaching team.
2. If the parent/guardian is dissatisfied with the outcome of these attempts, they should notify the school principal, who will schedule a meeting with the homeroom teacher and the parents/guardians. This meeting will be scheduled within seven working days from the time of notification; the meeting time will be convenient for everyone involved.

3. If the parents/guardians remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the previous meeting, they should notify Board of Trustees members designated to facilitate grievance situations. A meeting will be scheduled within seven working days from the time of notification; the meeting time will be convenient for everyone involved.
4. If the parents/guardians remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the previous meeting, they should notify the president of the Board of Trustees and a board meeting will be held as a final step to resolving the grievance within the system.
5. If the parents/guardians remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the previous meeting, legal avenues available to parents/guardians and students may be pursued.

#### **I.6. Extra-curricular activities (athletics, publications and organizations):**

##### **I.6.A. The program of extra-curricular activities planned for the School**

In Relational Education a broad curriculum is presented to the students every day. They take part in many activities and learning experiences, broadening their relationships with all that is around them. Students are challenged to push themselves out of their comfort zones and to experience activities and learning opportunities they otherwise thought themselves incapable of doing. This provides students an optimal time to build their own self-esteem as well as learn how to collaborate and be a team player. Therefore, the traditional extra-curricular activities of the middle and high school, such as interscholastic competitive sports, the arts, service projects and internship programs, are required for students enrolled at Dogwood Charter School. Students will have the choice of what to participate in and how much time they can devote to the activities outside of school hours. However, it is understood by students and parents that students are required to take part in sports, the arts, service projects, and internship programs throughout their middle and high school years.

Intramural sports will be offered in middle school. Students in high school will participate in at least one competitive sport during their four years at the School. Students will receive ample amounts of scaffolding, training, and encouragement to enable them to successfully participate in their chosen sport(s).

There will be opportunities for students to start their own clubs, with the stipulation that the organizations are inclusive and available to the entire student population. Clubs cannot be exclusive or divisive or the club will be discontinued or reformatted to adhere to school requirements.

Dogwood Charter School will appoint a Director of Organizational Development in Year 2 of operations. Responsibility of the Director of Organizational Development will include being knowledgeable about community opportunities for extra-curricular activities that support and enhance the School's mission and goals and to keep the adult community abreast of these events.

**I.6.B. The agreements entered into and plans developed with the local school district regarding participation of the School's students in extracurricular activities within the school district.**

In addition to the extracurricular activities that will be offered at Dogwood Charter School, according to Pennsylvania law, no school district of residence shall prohibit a student of a charter school from participating in any extracurricular activity of that school district of residence, provided that the student is able to fulfill all of the requirements of participation in such activity and the charter school does not provide the same extracurricular activity. Specifics for this will be discussed with the students' districts of residence.

**II. NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

**II.1. Statement of Need:**

**II.1.A. Why there is a need for this type of school**

**II.1.B. Why this charter school model is an appropriate vehicle to address this need**

(A and B are addressed together in the following section)

There are several needs that Dogwood Charter School intends to meet. First, there are limited educational options for parents and their children in the South Hills of Pittsburgh. While there are other charter school options, many have waitlists and still adhere to a traditional learning style. Beyond these, parents can choose between the public schools and parochial private schools, the latter of which are merging, leaving even fewer school options. There are very few private schools that are non-sectarian. Some families find other options, such as schooling their children in their home. Not everyone has the financial or situational means to afford private or home educational options; public charter schools fill this gap and make educational options accessible to all families in the area, regardless of socioeconomic status. Furthermore, competition is healthy and stimulates excellence in all public and private schools.

Second, the innovative, research based program serves as a model in the community. Many key features of the Dogwood Charter School represent a shift from local public and private educational programming. This shift in programming may be characterized in part by the following features:

- A reinvented system that nurtures and encourages a learning environment for everyone, including teachers, administrators, parents, and community members;

- Authentic curricula, assessment, and methodology based on relational learning;
- Class sizes that support deep learning;
- Beauty and order, freedom from distractions and utilitarian structures and systems
- Collaborative teaching methods that utilize the expertise of parents and community members in substantive ways; and
- An educational environment supported by Restorative Practices, which enable children and adults to learn together in an inclusive setting, respectful of all persons despite ability, race, class, religion, interest, and ideas.

Third, there is only one other charter school in the South Hills of Pittsburgh. Having another charter school in the South Hills will attract new families, provide new jobs, and nurture a responsible, resilient, independent citizenry for the future (providing tax relief). The School prepares all students for higher education. The school does not have a tracking system in which some students are on the college prep track while others are in “general ed” classes; due to the broad curriculum, all students will participate in different learning opportunities. Furthermore, since the school is a community of learners, parents and the community will be invited to classes, programs, assemblies and clubs. Dogwood families and children (future parents) hope to break generational trends and debilitating habits, replacing them with resilient, creative, respectful, ethical and disciplined habits of learning and full living.

In addition, now more than ever, there is a need to offer specific mental health support to children in our area, due to various social/societal pressures and world events; Dogwood Charter School will meet this need by providing a unique approach to social-emotional health that is not found in typical school settings. Students need to have their social emotional needs met first before optimal learning can happen;

- Dogwood Charter School will focus on meeting the social-emotional needs of all students to help foster a safe and nurturing place for learning. Social-Emotional themes and topics will be part of the students’ everyday learning, providing opportunities for all students to learn to safely express their emotions, learn to ask for help, and build empathy by helping others.
- Daily opportunities for the older students to help the younger students, through combined lessons, academic assistance, “buddy programs,” and shared school space, supports older children in building leadership, modeling skills, and increasing levels of empathy. Younger children build connections and learn alongside their older peers, through co-regulation and modeling of skills.
- Short lessons help students feel successful maintaining focus and concentration, building levels of confidence in their ability to learn.
- Increased time outdoors is linked to decreased levels of anxiety, stress, and depression within children; Dogwood Charter School is dedicated to providing students with a multitude of opportunities to be outdoors, including but not limited

- to play and exploration, outdoor meals, and holding classes outside.
- Dogwood Charter School will offer all students a Reflection Room. This space will offer a variety of sensory activities, creative prompts, and outdoor space to foster students' skills in self-observation, identifying and meeting their needs, self-regulation, and rest. Trained staff will be available to engage in co-regulation techniques as needed. This safe space will not only support students' social-emotional needs, but will increase overall well-being in the school environment. When the student feels ready, they may return to class at any time. Students will be given the opportunity to complete assignments in the room if necessary due to extended need. As students begin to build self-observation, awareness, and the ability to meet their own needs and handle stress, they will become more confident and independent learners.
- Individual counseling will be offered and available to every student. Depending on the need of the child, this could be twice a week, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or by check-in request.
- Dogwood Charter School will also provide regularly scheduled seminars, events, and activities for parents and families to learn and grow together, supporting the students' needs and learning, outside of the typical school day activities.
- Dogwood Charter School will provide regular training to help build staff skills in social-emotional techniques and provide frequent support to help solidify implementation. Dogwood Charter School will also offer regular Personal Development opportunities for staff, including adequate time within the daily schedule to meet their personal needs and regularly scheduled days for staff to focus on their personal development and wellbeing.

In an effort to serve the whole child, Dogwood has developed supports for all our students.

- We will have a social worker who works with all our students - with or without an Individualized Education Plan.
- We created the position of the Counselor/Therapist to support all students as a coach, not a disciplinarian. If they have emotional needs or are highly agitated, they can leave the classroom and go to them immediately. Those without IEPs need consistent, stable support and accountability, too, and so they act as a case manager to some.
- Both collaborate with staff.
- And finally, our Reflection Room is a place to cool off and to reset. Students can get a break from everyone, they can talk through the restorative questions, and they can remember coping strategies and return when they are ready.

## **II.2. School Demographics:**

**II.2.A. The School's enrollment projections for the first five years; The School's ultimate enrollment goal and the grades to be served; The age of kindergarten and age of beginner students; How many students are expected to be in each grade or grouping**

1. The school initially will serve K-8<sup>th</sup> grades during the 2022/2023 school year.

2. The school will add high school grades during the following years, beginning with 2023, until programming includes all 12 grades.
3. The students are placed in multi-age classrooms called forms.
4. Except for kindergarten, forms will combine traditional grades (e.g., first and second grade) to allow for differing student abilities across academic and non-academic skill areas. (Please see Appendix A)
5. The goal is to have 16-18 students in a form, but 20 will be the limit in grades K-5; limit of 25 for grades 6-12.
6. Kindergarteners must be five before September 1.

Projected enrollment numbers are provided in the following chart:

#### **STUDENT ENROLLMENT**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>
<b>Kindergarten</b>	20	40	40	40	40
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Grade</b>	20	20	40	40	40
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Grade</b>	20	20	20	40	40
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Grade</b>	20	20	20	20	40
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	20	20	20	20	20
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	20	20	20	20	20
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	25	25	25	25	25
<b>7<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	25	25	25	25	25
<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	25	25	25	25	25
<b>9<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	X	25	25	25	25
<b>10<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	X	X	25	25	25
<b>11<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	X	X	X	25	25
<b>12<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	X	X	X	X	25
<b>Totals</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>295</b>

#### **II.2.B.The community where the School will be located**

The Chartiers Valley School District is located in Southwestern part of Allegheny County. Scott Township — a municipality within that district wherein the school will be located — is relatively small with a land area of around 3.86 miles that about 17,000 residents call home. Chartiers Valley School District also includes the boroughs of Bridgeville and Heidelberg and serves approximately 30,000 residents in total, including those of Scott Township. The area is about 20 minutes southwest of Pittsburgh in Allegheny County and predominated by residential neighborhoods in the most classic sense. Like much of Pittsburgh's southern suburbs, coal mining



was the prevailing industry through the 1800s, which necessitated railway access. Many of those rails are still visible and in-use today, giving the area hints of nostalgia and character. While still rich with suburban neighborhoods, sections of the Bridgeville area have a slightly more rural feel. Material moving occupations, office jobs and retail occupations dominate the area, though there is a high degree of occupational diversity. Like much of the nation, the Pittsburgh region struggles to support its drug-dependent population. The number of 2019 drug overdose deaths in Allegheny County were about 13% higher than in 2018 with about 90% of those deaths attributed to opioid drugs. Allegheny County's murder rate decreased by 15% from 2018 to 2019, though rates outside Pittsburgh city limits are actually on the rise. About 28% of the Chartiers Valley School District's students qualify for free or reduced lunches compared to a 46% Pennsylvania state average. Chartiers Valley School District has the second lowest millage rate in Allegheny County.

### **II.2.C. Why this location was selected and other locations suitable to the needs and focus of the school**

The general location for this charter school was selected based on several factors including available space and convenience of proximity to multiple communities to maximize enrollment opportunities. Several of the founding team members are parents of children who attend or would be attending school in the surrounding school districts including Bethel Park, Peters Township, Mt. Lebanon, Upper St. Clair, South Park, South Fayette, and Canonsburg. The parents desire to create a school where their children will be able to attend. Additionally, several founding team members are motivated for professional reasons. Because their expertise and philosophies of an ideal learning environment matched the vision of the parents, a common purpose among the core team emerged. This model for learning and schooling is appropriate for any group who shares a common purpose and vision with the core team. Thus, Chartiers Valley is an ideal location to begin this school since it is centrally located in the county. This area is within the 10 mile radius of many South Allegheny communities along with West Allegheny communities of South Fayette, Montour, Robinson, Moon and Oakdale. There are limited options in the surrounding areas to appropriately serve a school environment.

### **II.2.D. The unique demographic characteristics of the student population to be served, including primary languages spoken**

The Chartiers Valley School District is a predominantly Caucasian group of students, though foreign-born residents in the area are actually higher than the county and state at-large.

Asian 7.0%

African American 4.0%

Hispanic 1.0%

Caucasian/Non-Hispanic 83.0%

Two or more races 5%

Eight percent of Chartiers Valley residents are foreign born, which is 1.4 times greater than the proportion of Allegheny County residents (5.7%) as a whole and about 20% higher than the rate in Pennsylvania (6.8%.) Similarly, about 93% of children ages 5-17 years old in the district speak English-only in their households. Of those Chartiers Valley residents born overseas, 76% of them are natives of Asia. Despite the district's higher rate of foreign-born residents, the rate of English language-only households is higher than the rate across the state of Pennsylvania (87.9%.) Based on 2018 data, the median household income in the district is \$66,924 or about 20% higher than the county median. The poverty rate in the district is 6.3% or about half the rate of the county and state.

### **II.3. District Relations/Evidence of Support:**

#### **II.3.A. Efforts made to notify district**

A letter of intent was mailed to the superintendent and school board president on October 12, 2020. A followup email was sent to the school board president on October 19, 2020. The charter school wants to work and function collegially within the existing district.

#### **II.3.B. The efforts to be implemented to maintain a collaborative relationship with school districts**

- The School will open professional development opportunities to the CVSD for joint learning. The School will open to the district's administration and faculty *Lesson Study* opportunities conducted during school hours for professional development and deeper understanding of the School's philosophy. In this way, the school also acts as a model.
- The School will open any of its competitive sports to CVSD schools that do not offer similar ones. This allows CVSD coaches, parents, teachers and students opportunities to observe and practice Relational Education methods. This is another way in which the school serves as a model.
- The School serves as a model of research-based methods that can be observed by the administration and faculty of the CVSD.
- The School will follow CVSD's calendar and bussing schedules as much as possible to honor the costs and convenience of transporting students to school.

Please see Appendix F for a letter of intent sent to the school district.

#### **II.3.C. The scope of community backing for the proposed charter school and its founding coalition including community support among teachers, parents, students, community members, institutional leaders and others, through the use of letters of support, surveys, or other tangible means**

## BRIEF SUMMARY

Dogwood has received great support from the community. Dogwood released a survey to the public on Sept 14, 2020, 223 people completed the survey by Nov 1, 2020. Out of 223 people 22% (50 people) said they would send their child to a Charlotte Mason charter school, 68% (152 people) said they were interested and might send their child to a Charlotte Mason charter school, and only 9% (21 people) said they would not send their child to a Charlotte Mason charter school. 166 people expressed support for Dogwood Charter School. In the survey, families were asked the number of children each family had and the grades they are currently in; according to the results, 360 children would be eligible to enroll at Dogwood Charter School out of all the families who expressed interest in our school. See Appendix E for data from the survey.

### **TOTAL COMMUNITY:**

**155** pre-enrolled students (Appendix E)

**484** total founding members, citizenship support, students and businesses (Appendices D & E)

### BREAK DOWN

See Appendix E for documents demonstrating the following support:

### LETTERS OF INTENT TO ENROLL:

**146** students (K-8<sup>th</sup> 2022)

**9** Preschool Students (K 2023-2026)

### EVIDENCE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

**9** businesses/organizations and individual supporters

**154** electronic signatures from public interest survey

**14** Founding Members and Planning Board Members

Please see Section III 1 for a detailed explanation of the scope of the community backing.

## **III. DESCRIPTION OF FOUNDING/MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **III.1. Profile of Founding Coalition**

**III.1.A. Description of the make-up of the group that is working together to apply for a charter, including the names of the founders, their background and experiences, and references for each.**

## Founding Members

The core founding team is an interdisciplinary group of 14 individuals. An array of persons and organizations comprise the founding coalition, all who have one thing in common- the desire to expand the range of educational opportunities in the community. Specifically, by developing a Charlotte Mason charter school, the coalition will establish an institution that offers a relational education, making its approach to instruction unique from the current public schools in the South Hills, thus diversifying the educational options available. The collaborative, consisting of all those who have joined in to help, includes:

- Parents and grandparents from across the South Hills of Pittsburgh
  - The founder of another Charlotte Mason charter school in Pottsville, PA
  - An accreditation organization providing programming in curriculum, assessment, instruction, community relations, and governance/professional development
  - A charter school business consulting firm
  - Licensed elementary, secondary, and special education teachers
  - A licensed counselor
  - A licensed speech pathologist
  - A University professor
  - A retired social worker
  - A local real estate broker
  - Parents who have homeschooled their children using Charlotte Mason's philosophies
  - A local piano instructor
  - Local business owners and organizations
  - A certified reading specialist
  - A local community college professor
  - A data engineer
  - A local freelance writer
- 
- Beth Opat White, BA, BS, is a level II certified special education teacher and elementary teacher. She has earned 31 graduate level credits. She earned both of her degrees from Clarion University in PA. She worked at City Charter High School for six years as a special education teacher. She worked closely with the content teachers to provide support to her students in a full inclusion environment. She also helped her students complete an internship and helped them transition to higher education. Currently she is the Assistant Director and teacher at St. David's Christian Early Learning Center. She collaborates with the Executive Director to maintain and run the preschool. She also teaches two preschool classes a week. She resides in Bethel Park with her husband and two children.
  - Katherine White MA CCC-SLP is a Senior Speech-Language Pathologist at UPMC Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh, PA. She earned her master's in communication disorder from the University of Pittsburgh in 2009. Katherine

began her career in geriatrics, but now specializes in pediatrics. Her clinical work has focused on dysphagia and voice disorders in both inpatient and outpatient settings and she is a member of many interdisciplinary teams including the Pediatric Voice, Resonance, and Swallowing center, Feeding and Swallowing Center, and the Aerodigestive Center. She frequently performs fiberoptic endoscopic swallow studies with her colleagues in ENT, modified barium swallow studies in radiology, clinical swallowing evaluations, vocal cord dysfunction evaluation, and voice disorder evaluations. Her specialty areas also include trach/vent populations and speaking valves as well as breastfeeding swallow evaluations. Katherine has published several peer reviewed articles on the subjects of dysphagia and voice disorders and has presented on a variety of topics nationwide.

- Megan Hennessey BA, MAT is a licensed teacher for grades 7-12 in Language Arts and English. She earned both of her degrees in PA, first her BA at Gettysburg College in English Literature followed by her MAT in secondary school education at the University of Pittsburgh in 2005. She worked at Carnegie Mellon University as an assistant director of admissions before pursuing teaching. She taught AP Literature and AP Language and Composition for 7 years in Fairfax County VA. Currently she teaches preschool at St. David's Christian Early Learning Center and is mother to three elementary aged children in Peters Township.
- Joanne White, LSW, is a licensed social worker (retired 2018). She graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees. She was the Director of Behavioral Health at a local nonprofit where she developed the Behavioral Health portion of the program's services and supervised staff who conducted home visits with pregnant and new mothers. She wrote major portions of the federal grant application each year, presented research and program innovations at the program's annual national conferences and other professional conferences. During her time as a social worker Ms. White loved providing the field placement experience for many social work students from the University of Pittsburgh.
- Jennie August, MA, ATR-BC, LPC is a Board Certified Registered Art Therapist and Licensed Professional Counselor. She graduated with her Masters in Art Therapy with a Specialization in Counseling along with an Autism Certification from Seton Hill University. She has been a mental health therapist working with children, teens and families for the past 8 years, currently working in private practice at South Hills Counseling in Upper St. Clair, PA. She specializes in neurodevelopmental disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder along with Anxiety, Depression and family transitional issues. She works closely with art and play based interventions along with family interventions that include connection-based parenting, empathetic training and mindfulness. She has also developed and run a series of Art and Yoga therapeutic groups along with conducting numerous social skills group

therapy groups, helping children build the skills to confidently navigate through social situations and build rewarding relationships

- Sarah Charlier-Vermeire, BS, is a certified elementary teacher. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Duquesne University. Sarah's career focus has been in early childhood education, where she taught preschool and has experience directing a child development center. Prior to that, Sarah worked as an Academic Counselor for the postsecondary and graduate online programs of a university. She is currently a full time mother and homeschool teacher to her children, and she shares her love of literacy with others as an independent consultant for a children's literature publisher.
- Amie Erickson, M.Ed., MA is an associate professor of Developmental Studies at the Community College of Allegheny County. She holds an undergraduate degree in anthropology from Bryn Mawr College, a master's degree in Language and Literacy Education from Penn State University, and a master's degree in English from Bowling Green State University. She is also a PA certified reading specialist and has taught secondary level reading and English, college reading and study skills, college composition, and first-year orientation courses. In addition, she currently homeschools her two elementary-aged children.
- Rebekka Lang is a licensed Realtor with Keller Williams Realty. She obtained her Bachelors of Science in Journalism with Boston University. Originally from Los Angeles, CA, she lives in Bethel Park with her husband and three children. Rebekka serves as a volunteer with Humane Animal Rescue and her local MoPs (Mothers of Preschoolers) group.
- Terri Obringer has a BA in Legal Studies from the University of Pittsburgh as well as a Paralegal Certification from Duquesne University. She currently works as a Fitness Instructor and also has a background in preschool teaching, a love for children and a love for learning. She recently took to homeschooling her three children and is loving the freedom to allow the children to explore more in-depth topics of their choosing.
- Elsbeth Pollman is a Sr. Manager in the healthcare revenue cycle. Elsbeth earned a degree in Sociology with a concentration in criminal justice and a degree in Spanish from Westminster College. Education has always been extremely important to her and she believes in allowing the natural curiosity of children to lead them to discover and learn what they are ready to know and understand.
- Andrew Pollman is a Systems Analyst at UPMC. Andrew has a BA in Psychology from Penn State University. Andrew believes that everyone learns in different ways and therefore should be afforded the opportunity to shape their own educational experiences throughout a lifetime of learning.
- Jeffrey (Jeff) Vermeire is a Senior Data Engineer at Kinship, a subsidiary of Mars

Petcare. He is a lifelong advocate for child-centered education, especially through play. Mr. Vermeire was an Independent candidate for Pennsylvania state Senate District 37 in 2019. He ran to introduce many pragmatic governmental and educational reforms in Pennsylvania. Mr. Vermeire lives in Collier Township with his wife, Sarah, and their children.

- Trinity Truair, BA in Interdisciplinary Studies, is a licensed elementary teacher with an additional certification in ESL. Trinity earned her degree in Texas where she taught 4th grade in Round Rock. Originally from PA, Trinity recently moved back in 2017 and has taught K-3, with one year in special education. Currently, she is a stay at home mom of 5 children. With her passion for authentic, hands on education, she hopes to be back in the classroom soon.
- Karen Galilei is a retired School Psychologist /Administrator who worked for the Allegheny Intermediate Unit's Preschool Early Intervention Program (DART) and had previously been employed as a School Psychologist in McKeesport Area School District and Canon McMillan School District. She received her Bachelor of Science from California University of PA, her Masters degree from Duquesne University, her School Psychology Certification from the University of Pittsburgh and her Principal Certification from Point Park University. While at DART she facilitated the Positive Behavior Grant collaborative project between early intervention and Head Start. Her team was one of 5 teams throughout the state to be awarded for implementation with fidelity. She believes that all children have the right to learn in a safe, accepting and educationally enriched environment.

With the help of Gillingham, the team began to work on the charter application, published a survey for community members to complete, gauging interest and support of a local charter school being created, held public information meetings via zoom to engage potential members, and created a Facebook page to advertise and find others interested in supporting alternative education in the county. Results of the survey are stated in section II.3.C.

### **III.1.B. How the group came together and partnership arrangements with existing schools, educational programs, businesses, non-profits, or any other entities or groups**

#### **Beginnings**

A number of things contributed to the core founding team's interest in pursuing a charter school. Beth Opat and Adam White are the parents of a daughter and a son, and they live in the Bethel Park School District. When it was time to register their daughter for Kindergarten they searched options in their district and surrounding districts. They were looking for a school that focused on teaching the whole child and encouraged children's innate curiosity and desire to learn. It became apparent that there was not an option in their area that would provide the education that they desired for their children. They did not have the option to send

their child to an alternative school so they enrolled their daughter into Kindergarten at their neighborhood school even though it did not have the teaching philosophies they desired. The staff and teachers at their neighborhood school were always kind and helpful, yet the Whites pursued schooling alternatives because of the textbook-based learning, lack of developmentally appropriate assessments, and the amount of homework given each night.

The Whites are not able to afford a private, home education for their children. Other families can also not afford private or even homeschooling alternatives, but all parents can afford a public charter school education. Furthermore, a charter school provides the means to offer a Relational Education to all children and families.

#### Research

The Whites have researched local charter schools and did not find one with a relational education. They decided to start the process of creating a school. The idea of creating a private school was not ideal because of the lack of accessibility to all students. Beth had worked for a charter school and decided to research the process to create one. With recommendations from friends, she was introduced to Nicolle Hutchinson from Gillingham, Jesse Bean from Charter Choices, Patricia Hennessey with law firm Barton Gilman LLP, and the PA Coalition for Charter Schools. When first speaking with Nicolle and learning about Charlotte Mason's relational education they knew this was the education they were looking for their children. In June of 2020 they asked Gillingham if their school could be replicated in their area. When they said yes, they started a partnership with Gillingham and asked Nicolle to be their consultant.

#### Accreditation

The Charlotte Mason Institute unanimously voted to start the accreditation process with Dogwood once approved. See Appendix I for a letter from the Secretary of the Charlotte Mason Institute.

#### Consultants

Gillingham supports educators in the practice of a Relational Education as presented by Charlotte Mason. Nicolle Hutchinson agreed that their foundation would provide an educational program with curriculum, professional development support, accreditation, and accountability to support Dogwood's effort to provide a Relational Education. See Appendix J for more information on Gillingham.

#### Planning Board

Eight Planning Board members currently serve as sub-committee chairs. The Planning Board is a select group of volunteers and Founding Members who demonstrate exceptional effort and expertise in the founding of the school. These members commit to the roles, responsibilities and norms as outlined in Appendix D. A graphic organizer demonstrating the governance of the planning board and the resumes of the planning board are in Appendix D.



### Founding Member Requirements

All Founding Members (FM) must meet the following requirements:

- understand and agree to the mission, vision, and philosophy of the school
- be on one of the 4 committee teams
- attend 3 sub-committee/founding member meetings
- actively participate
- help collect letter of intents
- attend at least 2 Dogwood Charter School events prior to opening

### Founding Member Committees

The committees that founding members may choose from include: Community Outreach, Facilities, Fundraising and Grants. Parents, guardians and grandparents who meet the above requirements will be allowed to enroll their children before the lottery. These individuals collaborated to develop the application for the charter school, to locate a building, to advertise, and to raise funds.

### Informing the Community

Since September 2020 Dogwood has:

- Held public information meetings (please see Sections V.1.A and B for details),
- Created and posted a Facebook Page
- From Oct 10th to Nov 12, 2021 Dogwood Charter School's Facebook page has 315 Page Likes and has reached 13,766 people
- Instagram account 49 followers
- Distributed out 400+ flyers and informational

### **III.1.C. Plans for further recruitment of founders or organizers of the school**

After the charter is approved, the planning board will discuss the recruitment of members for the Board of Trustees. Community outreach events and strategies will continue to spread the word to enable more parents and guardians to enroll their children. By the end of spring, no more founding members will be added, it will be too difficult for founding members to meet the required meeting attendance guidelines. Throughout the winter, spring and summer, more partnerships to find further areas for internships and volunteering opportunities, to offer a broad athletics program and to further the School's involvement in the community.

### **III.1.D. Information on the manner in which community groups are involved in the charter school planning process.**

#### **Business Supporters and Partners**

Modern Miss Mason- Leah Boden  
Brookline Teen Outreach  
Antonio's Pizzeria

Higher Voice Studio  
Richbarn Roasters  
Pipitone Group  
RefocusED, inc.

See Appendix E for letters of support.

The above organizations and businesses are documented as supporting the school in different ways. Some have already sponsored the School with their resources, expertise and time. Some intend to partner in the future by offering service projects, field studies and internship opportunities for the School's high school students. In order to ensure quality programming, volunteers, parents and other community members will lead and participate in activities in the school under the guidance of a certified teacher. All persons working with students will provide the School with criminal and child abuse clearances. The School's directors will be responsible for ongoing coordination of community involvement with the school. Coordination of community outreach is a strategic rather than tactical role because community involvement is necessary for the school to achieve its mission.

Antonio's Pizzeria offered their location to allow us to have an informational table for community members.

The law offices of Barton Gilman LLP, Philadelphia, Patricia Hennessey Esquire offer her services free of charge.

Efforts to reach out further and to publicize to the community are described in section V.1.A/B.

### **III.2. Governance**

#### **III.2.A. The proposed management organization of the school, including the following requirement:**

**An affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Board of Trustees of the charter school, duly recorded, showing how each member voted, shall be used in order to take action on the following subjects:**

- *School calendar (must include 990 hours or 180 days of instruction for secondary students [grades 7-12] and 900 hours or 180 days for elementary students[grades 1-6]. School cannot be kept open for the purpose of ordinary instruction, on Sundays, Fourth of July, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, the first of January, Christmas, or Saturday, except when Monday is fixed by the board of directors as the weekly holiday for the entire school year)*
- *Adopting additional books and curriculum*
- *Appointing or dismissing charter school administrators*
- *Adopting the annual budget*
- *Purchasing or selling of land*

- *Locating new buildings or changing the locations of old ones*
- *Creating or increasing any indebtedness*
- *Adopting courses of study*
- *Designating depositories for school funds*
- *Entering into contracts of any kind where the amount involved exceeds \$5,000*
- *Fixing salaries or compensation of administrators, teachers, or other employees of the charter school*
- *Entering into contracts with and making appropriations to an intermediate unit, school district or Area Vocational/Technical School for the charter's proportionate share of the cost of services provided or to be provided by the foregoing entities*

Dogwood Charter School is organizing as a Pennsylvania Non-Profit Corporation and is filing for recognition as a tax exempt public charity as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. A Board of Trustees will govern Dogwood Charter School. The Board of Trustees will participate in a formal Board orientation and training by an outside consultant. The Board will consist of at least 5 to 9 Trustees. In order to reflect the School's mission and principles in the makeup of the Board of Trustees, the Board will include representatives from the various constituencies involved in the school as described in the Bylaws. The Board will include a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The governing strategy of the School will incorporate the principles of the relational learning model set forth in Dogwood Charter School's mission statement and pedagogical rationale. The School will implement a shared leadership model described in Section III.2.E. The principal and/or director of organizational growth will facilitate the stewardship of this leadership model and managerial roles of the School.

#### Board of Trustee Training

Board of trustees will be required to complete training programs pursuant to Act 55 of 2017.

- 1.) Section 328 of the Public School Code states "[t]he training program shall consist of a minimum of four (4) hours of instruction . . . ." 24 P.S. § 3-328(a)(1).
- 2.) Section 328(b)(1) of the School Code provides that the initial training programs "shall consist of a minimum of four (4) hours of instruction" and must cover Article XVII-A (The Pennsylvania Charter School Law) and contain information regarding the following topics: (1) instruction and academic programs, (2) personnel, (3) fiscal management, (4) operations, (5) governance and (6) ethics and open meetings. 24 P.S. §3-324(b)1).
- 3.) Section 328(b)(2) of the School Code provides that "[t]he advanced training program shall consist of a minimum of two (2) hours of instruction, including information on relevant changes to Federal and State public school law and regulations, including Article XVII-A, fiscal management and other information deemed appropriate by the Department of Education to enable the trustee to serve effectively." 24 P.S. 3-328 (b)(2).

Initial Training Program Requirements:

- Article XVII-A (The Pennsylvania Charter School Law)
- Instruction and academic programs
- Personnel Fiscal management
- Operations Governance
- Ethics and open meetings, to include the requirements under 65 Pa.C.S. Pt. II (relating to accountability)

Advanced Training Programs:

- Relevant changes to Federal and State public school law and regulations
- Fiscal management
- Other information deemed appropriate by the Department of Education to enable the Board Director to serve effectively

Source:<https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/Governance/Act55/Pages/default.aspx>

### **III.2.B. How the Board of Trustees will be selected**

The Planning Board of the Dogwood Charter School Collaborative will nominate and elect the Trustees for all open Trustee spots on the Board before the School opens in the fall of 2022. The then serving Board will ensure that any nominated candidates from the School's stakeholders satisfy the conditions for serving on the Board of the Dogwood Charter School as specified in Section III.2.C below.

### **III.2.C. The steps that will be taken to maintain continuity between the founding coalition's vision and the Board of Trustees**

As a learning center where all board members, teachers, students, administrators, and community volunteers participate in the process of teaching, learning, and leading and strive to nurture a learning environment, Dogwood's learning community risks losing its focus. To ensure that it does not, all members are required to support and maintain the CMI program and accreditation. This accreditation will ensure that the school maintains continuity between the relational education, the Board of Trustees, and all stakeholders.

In addition, all incoming members of the Board will be required to participate in an orientation program. The orientation will inform each elected Board member in the pedagogy and practice of the School as well as the practice, norms, and bylaws of the Board of Trustees. It is asked that all individuals whom the membership nominates for a place on the Board express an understanding and commitment to the relational method of learning as well as the mission and guiding principles of the School prior to accepting their nomination.

As a demonstration of their commitment to Dogwood Charter School and as a means of keeping all Board members familiar with the School's approach to education, the Bylaws will require each Board member to volunteer at the School

for at least two hours per month and attend an annual Board retreat.

In addition, the Board will have the authority to establish committees as it deems necessary to carry out the mission of the School. Each Board member will serve for three years. In order to maintain continuity, the Board members will serve staggered terms. Also to maintain continuity, there will be one permanent member of the Board of Trustees: a parent of an enrolled student. The Board will also be responsible for all hiring decisions (an Executive Director, Principal-Director of Education, faculty, and staff).

### **III.2.D. The roles and responsibilities of the Board**

The School's by-laws list the following as the powers and duties of the Board of Trustees:

#### **ARTICLE III: POWERS AND DUTIES**

- (1) The Board of Trustees shall have the power and responsibility to engage in the following acts, by an affirmative vote of the majority of the members:
  - a. Sign a written charter with the Board of Education of the School District;
  - b. Establish and maintain all policies governing the operation of the School;
  - c. Approve the appointment of an Executive Director/Principal and to approve the appointment or dismissal of staff members as recommended by the CEO/Principal;
  - d. Adopt the school calendar;
  - e. Adopt textbooks;
  - f. Appoint or dismiss school administrators;
  - g. Adopt the annual budget and conduct an annual independent audit of the School's finances;
  - h. Buy or sell land;
  - i. Locate new buildings or change the location of old buildings;
  - j. Create or increase indebtedness;
  - k. Adopt courses of study in accordance with CMI; Adopt courses of study;
  - l. Designate depositories for school funds;
  - m. Determine salaries or compensation of administrators, teachers and other employees of the School;
  - n. Enter into contracts with and make appropriations to an intermediate unit, school district or area vocational/technical school for the School's proportionate share of the cost of services provided or to be provided by the foregoing entities;
  - o. Authorize the School's maintenance workers to perform any necessary repairs, construction or other maintenance work in the School;
  - p. Authorize a committee of the Board or appoint a qualified hearing examiner to hold hearings regarding recommendations of suspension or expulsion of students.
  - q. Authorize a committee of the Board or appoint a qualified hearing

examiner to hold hearings regarding recommendations of suspension or dismissal of employees with or without cause. Specifically, the Board shall, via the approved policies of the school, convene to hear the recommendations of the School CEO/Principal regarding any employee issue. Following the CEO/Principal, or the CEO/Principal's designee should the CEO/Principal be the employee at issue, the Board shall 1) make a determination based on the information obtained at that meeting; or 2) authorize a committee to gather additional evidence, as needed and appropriate, for the Board's review of the issue. Thereafter, the Board may render its final decision based on all evidence obtained and in conformity to the employee's Employment Agreement.

- (2) The Board of Trustees shall also have the following responsibilities and powers:
- a. Understand and uphold the School's philosophy, mission, vision and CMI program;
  - b. Attend the annual Board Retreat;
  - c. Actively participate during School hours for at least 2 hours a month;
  - d. Enlist individuals from the community to serve as resources, in service hours and monetarily;
  - e. Demonstrate fundraising and public relations efforts;
  - f. Monitor the performance of the School based on a variety of information including student performance, CMI accreditation program, and parent and staff satisfaction;
  - g. Serve as a Board of Appeals with respect to complaints arising out of the School's operation that cannot be resolved by the staff, the CEO/Principal or other school administrators;
  - h. Coordinate long-range planning and resource development;
  - i. Serve as the body of last resort in the resolution of complaints;
  - j. The Board may exercise whatever other powers may be necessary to further the mission and operation of the School.

### **III.2.E. The steps that will be taken to facilitate a productive relationship between administrators and teachers**

The school team creates a respectful atmosphere that fosters trust and responsibility between administrators and teachers by:

1. Providing time in the schedule for reflective practice and professional growth that does not take away from teachers' planning periods,
2. Collaboratively setting the School's norms to determine the School's culture,
3. Participating in team builders and social activities to develop relationships so that persons can work together productively,
4. Creating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating a Relational Governance model based on relational principles and shared leadership structures that allows teachers to participate in the academic AND social areas of learning.

For a detailed description of the research-based relational governance model

the School will implement, please see Appendix A. Below is an overview of this model that facilitates productive relationships between administrators and teachers:

### Dogwood's Relational Governance Model

#### Principles:

Dogwood Charter School will implement a system-wide leadership model based upon three pivotal elements because research suggests that leadership frameworks based on these elements are good for principals, teachers and students:

- respect for the person,
- learning organizational concepts, and
- shared leadership principles and practice.

#### Overview:

In this model, the principal and teachers and staff share in the responsibility of leading the school. All members:

- Learn to a) lead, b) follow and c) use tools and structures to lead the school as a team;
- Learn together about children, their professions, areas of interest, and their fields;
- Collaborate on the problems and strategic plans of the School; and
- Respect each other's backgrounds, expertise and abilities.

#### Roles:

The Principal and School Directors become the facilitators and “teachers of teachers,” as they guide, model and create opportunities for learning and leading. The principal relies upon the relationships and interactions of persons and situations (Spillane, 2006) rather than leadership role, status or personality. S/he provides alternatives in which power is found in many roles and communal forms of decision-making. Effective influence stems from the learning, teamwork and participation of the learning community of adults which is *cared for and sustained* by formal leaders (Donaldson, 2001; Sadler, 2003). Theorists suggest that principals replace command-and-control with guidance and empowerment so that teachers are decision makers. In this sense, leadership is a relationship rather than a role.

When leadership is a relationship founded on trust and confidence, people take risks, make changes and keep organizations and movements alive. Through that relationship, leaders turn their constituents into leaders themselves (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Thus, the principalship is not diminished but reconfigured, power is located in service not control, and everyone is a learner and leader with great potential and giftedness.

Implementation Principles:

1. *Persons trump systems.*
2. *Everyone takes part in communal and individual learning to “construct meanings and discover goals that lead toward a common purpose of schooling”* (Lambert, 1995, p.29; Donaldson, 2001).
3. *Teachers as leaders practice the ideas and reflect on that practice in community* (Elmore, 2000).
4. *Leadership becomes a part of teachers' work when leadership comes from teachers' expertise, not from formal titles and formal power* (Elmore, 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2007). In decision-making practice, some individuals lead and some follow, depending on the situation (Elmore, 2000, Spillane, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2007). Leadership in this context becomes an interaction rather than a role (Spillane, 2006). Thus, teachers do not take on extra roles that overburden their already burdened day.
5. *The principal stewards evaluation and holds “individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result”* (Elmore, 2000, p.15). Structures that scaffold professional learning and leading are "revisited periodically to see if they are fulfilling a need or simply existing" (Moller & Pankake, 2006, p.113). (Please see Sections I.4.B and V.3.C on accountability practice and procedures.)
6. *Shared governance grows through stages.*

### **III.2.F. The nature of parental and student involvement in decision-making matters where appropriate**

As a learning community, all adults and students are learners. Ample circumstances will allow everyone to learn together: book clubs, collaboration meetings, field studies, work days, the Board of Trustees meetings, orientations and surveys. Parents will be encouraged to participate in school activities and volunteer at the school to the extent they are able. All parent (and other) volunteers will be required to attend an orientation program before volunteering at the school and upon enrollment of new students. Parents will be represented on the Board of Trustees. As parents have busy schedules and may have limited resources, the School will research ways to provide childcare for many of these meetings. Students will take part in Reflective Practices, Restorative Practices and trimester student/parent/teacher conferences, thus informing future school decisions, as well.

### **III.2.G. Submitted copies of the school's by-laws, contracts and other documents required by pending charter school legislation or applicable law - The requirements for the bylaws follow:**



*The bylaws must contain a provision for “failure to organize or neglect of duty”. Specifically, the bylaws must outline a removal procedure for the failure of a Board member to perform his or her duties as outlined in the Charter School Law. No Board member shall as a private person engage in any business transaction with the charter school of which he or she is a trustee, be employed in any capacity by the charter school of which he or she is a trustee, or receive from such charter school any pay for services rendered to the charter school. A charter school Board of Trustees shall have a designated treasurer who shall receive all funds including local, state and federal funds and privately donated funds. The treasurer shall also make payments out of the same on proper orders approved by the Board of Trustees, signed by the president or vice-president of the Board. The treasurer may pay out such funds on orders that have been properly signed without the approval of the Board first having been secured for the payment of amounts owing under any contracts which shall previously have been approved by the Board, and by which prompt payment the charter will receive a discount or other advantage.*

Please see Appendix B for a full copy of Dogwood Charter School's Bylaws.

### **III.2.H. Board members' names, addresses, phone numbers and resumes**

The following individuals serve as Dogwood Charter School's Founding Planning Board. They will determine the Board of Trustees once the charter is approved and before the School opens in the fall of 2022. Resumes, including addresses and phone numbers, can be found in Appendix D.

- Elizabeth Opat White, BA, BS, fundraising committee; assistant preschool director, educator, parent
- Joanne White, LSW, charter committee; licensed social worker (retired), grandparent
- Katherine White, MA CCC-SLP, outreach committee; speech pathologist, parent
- Rebekka Lang, BS, facilities committee; residential realtor, parent
- Terri Obringer, BS, fundraising committee; front desk/account maintenance, parent
- Jennie August, ATR-BC, LPC, MA, outreach committee; art therapist and mental health professional, parent
- Jeffery Vermeire, fundraising committee; senior intelligence engineer, parent

## **IV. FINANCE AND FACILITY**

### **IV.1. Financing**

#### **IV.1.A. Preliminary Startup and Operating Budget**

Copies of the Dogwood Charter School (“Dogwood”) start-up and operating budgets are attached to this application as Appendix C. Included in these forms are:

- Operating Budget for Fiscal Years Ending 2023-27
- Staffing List for Fiscal Years Ending 2023-27
- Breakdown of Site Costs for Fiscal Years Ending 2023-27
- Enrollment Model & Revenue Calculations for Fiscal Years Ending 2023-27

#### **IV.1.B. Purchasing Procedures**

The purchasing procedures of Dogwood will comply with Section 1725-A of Charter School legislation. The goal of the financial procedures will be to provide flexibility while maintaining adequate controls and oversight. The Board of Trustees will approve the financial budget and financial procedures. The School anticipates engaging an independent Business Manager, Charter Choices, Inc., to provide the School with “back office” and fiscal management services. The Business Manager will oversee the school’s financial system and ensure that budgets are itemized according to the Board’s requirements.

The school administration will be authorized to spend up to \$5,000 for any single transaction. Expenditures above \$5,000 will be permitted when allocated funds are available in the budget category and the school administration, Business Manager and Board Finance Committee sign off on these expenditures. The Board Treasurer will check to ensure that competitive bids have been entertained where appropriate. Expenditures over \$10,000 must receive prior Board or Executive Committee approval. The Business Manager or school administration will report on the financial status to the Board of Trustees at each meeting of the Board. The Board will develop additional procedures as the need arises.

#### **IV.1.C. Fund Raising Efforts to Generate Capital or Supplement Per-Pupil Allocation**

Dogwood has not undertaken any official fundraising efforts to defray its start-up costs. All expenses related to the preparation of this charter application, the identification of a viable property and the establishment of all necessary vendor and partner relationships are detailed in the Operating Budget (see tab, “Start-Up Expenses”), and have been paid for by the Dogwood Founding Group with no expectation of repayment by the charter school.

Once the school is operational and has begun enrolling students, all outstanding invoices and vendor payments related to the preparation for and start of the school year will be settled using the school’s standard revenue (i.e., per pupil allocations).

In addition, the Founding Coalition of Dogwood recognizes that a successful fundraising campaign is necessary for the long-term financial viability of the charter school, and

intends to eventually implement a capital development fund and hire a fundraising consultant to embark on a campaign to raise funds for school operations. No actual fundraising revenues are contemplated in the budgetary assumptions that comprise the school's Operating Budget (submitted as Appendix C).

The Board of Trustees also plans to create a Development Committee, which will coordinate both public and private fundraising efforts. Once the charter is approved, this committee will seek funds through partnerships with local businesses. The school administrators will write proposals for funding from Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, Ready to Learn, E-Rate, 21st Century Grants and other sources, including federal, state and foundation funds.

Additionally, the school has applied for its 501(c)3 status which will allow individuals to make contributions to the school on a tax-deductible basis.

#### **IV.1.D. Description of the Implementation of the Following Required Financial Procedures**

The Business Manager, Charter Choices, or school administrators of Dogwood shall deposit the funds belonging to the school in a depository approved by the Board and shall at the end of each month make a report to the Board of Trustees of the amount of funds received and disbursed by him or her during the month. All deposits of school funds by the Business Manager shall be made in the name of the school. The Board of Trustees of the school shall invest school funds consistent with sound business practices.

Authorized types of investments for charter schools shall be:

- United States Treasury bills
- Short-term obligations of the United States Government or its agencies or instrumentalities
- Deposits in savings accounts or time deposits or share account of institutions insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation or the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund to the extent that such accounts are so insured, and for any amounts above the insured maximum, provided that approved collateral as provided by law therefore shall be pledged by the depository
- Obligations of the United States of America or any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith and credit of the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith of the Commonwealth, or of any political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith and credit of the political subdivision
- Shares of an investment company registered under the Investment Company of America Act of 1930 (54 Stat. 789, 15 U.S.C. \*80a-1 et seq.) as defined by PA 24 PS 4-430.1 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

Note: All investments shall be subject to the standards set forth in PA 24PS-430.1 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

The Business Manager shall settle his or her accounts annually with the Board of Trustees for each year, and shall prepare monthly balance sheets, income statements and offer a full accounting of activity (check detail, accounts payable aging, etc.) as required (see details below).

An annual audit shall be conducted according to the requirements of Article 24 of the School Code of 1949. Charter School Boards of Trustees are required to follow the requirements set forth for School Boards in this section.

Dogwood is planning to implement the policies and procedures defined above. Specifically, the following are examples of the proposed financial procedures that Dogwood will follow:

#### Budgets

No later than 90 days prior to the beginning of each fiscal year (July 1), the Business Manager and the school administration will prepare and submit together to the Board of Trustees a proposed budget ("Proposed Operating Budget") for the operation of the school during the ensuing school year. Each Proposed Operating Budget will set forth all of the revenues (local, state and federal) that the school anticipates receiving, a proposed schedule of fees, and all of the expenditures anticipated to be necessary for the operation of the school, both (1) during the ensuing school year and (2) during the succeeding two school years. Each Proposed Operating Budget will further set forth each category of expense, the sources and uses of funds, fund accounting income statement, cash flow, capital expenditures, and any other appropriate items, for the ensuing year and for the succeeding two years. Each Proposed Operating Budget will reflect the school administration and Business Manager's view of the most economical, reasonable methods of operating and maintaining the School during the years to which that Proposed Operating Budget relates.

The Board of Trustees will, after reviewing and analyzing the Proposed Operating Budget, communicate to the Business Manager and the school administration any changes, additions or deletions it believes should be made in such a Proposed Operating Budget. After making such changes, the Board of Trustees will then approve the Proposed Operating Budget.

It is understood, however, that each operating budget will be an estimate only and that unforeseen circumstances such as, but not limited to, the costs of labor, material, services and supplies, casualty, operation of law, or economic and market conditions may make adherence to the operating budget impracticable, and departures, therefore, may be required due to causes of the foregoing nature or for other business reasons. Accordingly, if revenues of the school for any year are less than budget or if the school will require any expense category to exceed the corresponding amount in the budget in any year, then the Board of Trustees, school administration, and the Business Manager will meet promptly to determine if an adjustment to the operating budget is necessary.

### Financial Statements

The Business Manager will report to the school's Board of Trustees in writing monthly, for the preceding month, with monthly balance sheets, statements of income and sources and uses of funds with respect to the school for such month and cumulatively for the fiscal year-to-date, as well as any recommended changes to the then-current approved operating budget that the Business Manager or school administration considers necessary or appropriate. The Board of Trustees and the administrators will examine the monthly financial statements to ensure that the school is meeting the annual approved budget for the fiscal year. The financial statements will be used as a tool to assist the Board of Trustees and school administration in making decisions that ensure the school's financial viability while meeting the school's mission.

### Audit

The Board Treasurer, or the Finance Committee, in consultation with the Business Manager and school administrators, will engage an accounting firm or other appropriate third party to perform an audit of the books and records maintained for the school in accordance with applicable regulations. This appointment will have to be approved by the Board of Trustees. The audit is to be completed and a report to be furnished to the Board within 90 days after the end of the school's fiscal year (June 30). Copies will also be provided to the authorizing school district annually. The annual school audit will be conducted according to the requirements of Article 24 of the School Code of 1949, using the requirements set forth for school boards.

### Operating Account

The Business Manager will establish, on an agency basis for the school, one or more bank accounts, with mutually acceptable financial institutions (the "Operating Accounts"). The Business Manager will cause all gross revenues to be deposited into the Operating Accounts, and cause all operating expenses (including, without limitation, payments of operating expenses, payroll, and payroll taxes) to be paid out of the Operating Accounts for and on behalf of the school. The Operating Accounts shall be used exclusively in connection with the operation of the school.

### Working Capital

The Business Manager's representative(s) shall provide assistance to the school to seek a line of credit with a financial institution to be utilized to fund seasonal or other cash flow deficiencies.

### Payroll

The Business Manager will provide "back office" accounting services for the school, including the following:

- Payroll services, including processing all payroll payments to employees, issuing W-2 statements and maintaining payroll records, payment of all Federal, State, and local payroll taxes, and all employee benefit expenditures
- Accounts payable services (including, but not limited to, the processing thereof)
- Accounts receivable services (i.e., School District Billing)

- Maintaining accounting system records and reports
- Petty cash management
- Tracking of expenditures for furniture, fixtures and equipment

#### Federal Programs & PIMS

Charter Choices will work with school employees to submit federal and state grant applications (Titled funding, IDEA, etc.) and meet all monthly, quarterly and annual reporting requirements (for enrollment, staff composition and finance) as required by PDE, including the PDE-2028 (Budget), Annual Financial Report (AFR), etc.

The school will employ appropriate on-site record keepers as necessary to provide the Business Manager with operational data.

#### **See Appendix I – Financial Policies**

### **IV.2. Facility**

#### **IV.2.A. Descriptions and addresses of facilities under consideration**

The primary facility under consideration is located at 1734 Bower Hill Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15243, to be leased from St. Michael the Archangel Parish. This facility is already zoned for educational use as it formerly housed a K-8 parochial school and meets all of the programmatic and spatial design needs required by DCS. Only minor modifications will be required prior to the opening of school in September 2022.





## Facilities and Parking Map



The square footage of the free-standing building located at this property is 50,000 square feet, along with over 11 acres of surrounding land (including ample space for a school garden, outdoor field studies, forest trails, outdoor classrooms, etc.). The school building will feature an administrative suite, guidance/counseling offices, cafeteria, auditorium and physical education spaces (both indoor and outdoor), library, STEM/Robotics labs, visual and performing arts classrooms, and a Special Education suite. It will also provide a total of 13 “standard” classrooms for the delivery of core instruction to students K-12. There is ample on-site parking, as well as an area for a bus drop-off and pick-up loop on site, with access to major surface roads and nearby highways.

A Letter of Intent to Lease, signed by the owner of the building, St. Michael the Archangel Parish, is included in Appendix H. The initial term of the lease is 5 years, with an option to renew for an additional five-year period.

#### **IV.2.B. Site Suitability**

As this property was previously a beloved community (parochial) school, it is especially suited for our purposes. It provides a variety of spaces that will provide ideal accommodation for our needs - administrative, instructional, hands-on learning, social and recreational, including large gathering spaces (cafeteria, gymnasium, theater, etc.). It is a fully functioning structure – with entry to the building being level with the sidewalk.

We anticipate that the space will meet all pertinent code requirements, including school code, ADA compliance, Township ordinance requirements for utilities, local building codes, and all other federal, state and local health and safety laws and regulations. The space will require only light modifications (painting, installation of enhanced wireless network, some lighting and appliances, door removal and/or installation, etc.). Pursuant to Section 1715-A of PA charter school law, all religious objects and symbols will be removed from the facility.

In addition to its academic suitability, the facility also offers ample outdoor play space that can be utilized for afterschool clubs and programs, field day events, community gatherings, outdoor learning, recess and play, etc.

All of the heating, ventilation, lighting, sewer and water systems meet current building code standards. We have met with the property’s owner, St. Michael the Archangel Parish, which has provided written assurances of its intent to lease the space and complete any necessary modifications by July 1, 2022, to allow sufficient time for subsequent installation of new furniture, technology, and eventually occupancy by staff and students.

See Appendix H for floor plans of the current facility.



#### **IV.2.C. Facility Maintenance**

Dogwood Charter School will hire its own Custodian who will be on site at all times while the school is open to the students. The charter school and its Custodian will be responsible for the long-term facility maintenance of the building, including both general maintenance (i.e. heating, ventilating, lighting, sanitary conditions, water supply, exterior and roof maintenance, etc.) and daily operational maintenance (i.e. fixtures, light bulbs, interior painting, etc.).

Dogwood's 5-year Budget includes a Payroll line item for its Custodian, along with related expense line items for custodial and facility maintenance costs, including security.

#### **IV.2.D. Acquisition of Facility/Land**

Dogwood is currently working with the owner of the property detailed above, St. Michael the Archangel Parish, to prepare the space for occupancy by the school in Summer 2022. DCS will assume the cost of any physical modifications.

#### **IV.2.E. Financing Plans**

As Dogwood's proposed occupancy would be based on a 5-year lease (rather than a purchase), there will be no need to secure financing. The school may decide to pursue short-term start-up financing through Charter School Capital (see Loan Terms in Appendix H) to cover its security deposit and initial purchase of furniture and equipment, but this is not contemplated in the school's Operating Budget. A start-up loan, if pursued, would be payable within the first year of operations, and would be borrowed against the school's receivables.

### **IV.3. Liability and Insurance**

#### **IV.3.A. Description of insurance coverage plans**

Dogwood will obtain all necessary insurance either through a broker or through direct placement with a provider. It will obtain favorable rates through competitive bidding or by allowing the broker to shop rates consistent with the quality of coverage or through joining a consortium of charter schools that have already obtained competitive premiums.

Dogwood is working with Babb, Inc., a commercial insurance agency that will develop a preliminary cost for General Liability, Property, Workers' Compensation as well as Directors' and Officers' Coverage for the Board to be used in our budget projections.

Please see Appendix I for a Letter of Intended Coverage from Babb, Inc..

The school will secure General Liability insurance (including coverage for after-school and field trip activities), Errors and Omissions Coverage, Directors and Officers Liability, Employee Liability, Property and Casualty Insurance and Worker's Compensation.

All coverage will be provided by an insurance company that has a rating of “A” or better and a financial size category of “VII” or better, according to A.M. Best Co. Copies of appropriate certificates of insurance will be provided to the Chartiers Valley School District prior to the opening of the school.

The following chart provides a more detailed view of the types of insurance and limits the charter school will secure:

<b>Type of Insurance</b>	<b>Limit</b>
Business Personal Property	500,000
General Liability Products – completed operations Personal Injury Advertising Injury Damage to Premises Rented Medical Expense	3,000,000 general aggregate Included 1,000,000 per occurrence 1,000,000 per occurrence 100,000 per occurrence 5,000 per occurrence
Sexual Abuse Occurrence Limit	1,000,000
Defense Expense – Each Sexual Abuse Occurrence	1,000,000
Defense Expense – Aggregate Limit	3,000,000
Employee Theft	100,000
Commercial Automobile (School buses)	1,000,000
Workers Compensation Insurance and Employers Liability	Per Law
Student Accident	25,000 per person
Accidental Death, Dismemberment, or Loss of Sight	20,000 per person
School Leaders Errors and Omissions	2,000,000
Umbrella-Excess Liability Coverage	1,000,000

The representatives of Dogwood understand the requirement to provide medical insurance coverage for employees that are the “same as” those provided to employees in the Chartiers Valley School District. It also understands the need to protect the Board and employees in the conduct of their work.

Medical insurance coverage will be limited to a Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) or an HMO; indemnity coverage will be provided if it can be obtained and if the employee will pay a share of the premiums similar to that paid by school employees in the Chartiers Valley School District. Prescription, dental, and vision plans will be as similar to plans offered to the staff in the school district as providers will offer.

As indicated, liability insurance with umbrella coverage, auto liability (in the event that staff uses their own vehicles on charter school business), professional liability, directors' and officers' liability, insurance for errors and omissions, fire theft and vandalism on building and contents, workers' compensation and appropriate riders will be obtained through a broker when a Board is established, assets are acquired, employees hired, etc.

#### **IV.4. Student Accounting**

##### **IV.4.A. Description of School Enrollment and Attendance Procedures**

###### **Enrollment**

In accordance with the Dogwood Code of Conduct, students will be expected to attend school daily. Dogwood will implement a system for maintaining student enrollment information as required under 1730-A of the Charter School Law (Act 22 of 1997). See Appendix J for a copy of Dogwood's student handbook including a copy of the code of conduct and Appendix I for the enrollment policy.

Specifically, Dogwood will collect all of the necessary data for each student and will file all forms required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (i.e. PDE-3059CS Instructional Time Summary, PDE-30262C Annual Attendance Membership Report, PDE-3002CS Summary Report of Aggregate Days Membership) and the participating school districts. Additionally, Dogwood will use a student information software system, such as Skyward, to track enrollment data to ensure that the enrollment figures are always current, reflecting new students and any withdrawals.

###### **Attendance**

Students will be expected to attend school every day. If a student is absent, every attempt will be made to contact that student's parent or guardian to inquire about the reason for his or her absence. The school will follow the attendance guidelines set forth in the Public School Code regarding unexcused absences.

When absences occur, it is the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to provide a written note regarding the reason for the absence. In the case of frequent absences or absences not accompanied by a note, the counselor or designated staff member will contact the student's parent or guardian to determine the cause of the absence(s), and appropriate action will be taken, if needed.

The student information software system mentioned above will also be used to track attendance quickly and accurately, allowing for seamless communication between the teachers and the administration and the administration and the parents.

#### **V. IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

##### **V.1. Recruitment and Marketing Plan**

### **V.1.A. How we will Attract Eligible Applicants in the First Year**

The members of the Founding Coalition and Board of Trustees, and the newly hired school administrators will work in concert to recruit students.

Expected activities will include but not be limited to:

- Posting on our website and social media
- Design and disseminate fact sheets, brochures, working copies of curriculum
- Host open houses and informational meetings for various stakeholder groups
- Give presentations at local community/recreation centers
- Advertise in local newspapers and on local radio stations
- Work with existing community organizations in the South Hills Area of Pittsburgh to identify potential students
- Use public service announcements on local cable channels and on the local municipalities' websites

Dogwood is responding to a need of the communities and neighborhoods of the Greater Pittsburgh Area to provide a new and different kind of school for their students. The special collaboration between the school district and Dogwood will mean that this public charter school will be seen as another viable educational option for the families we service. As a result, it is hoped that members of the local community will take an active interest in the Dogwood educational program, and in referring families who would especially benefit from having their children participate in its educational programs.

To date we have pre-enrollment letters/signatures of 141 students who will be eligible for enrollment when we open in September 2022. We will continue to recruit additional students during the submission waiting process and will submit the names and addresses of additional pre-enrollments prior to the public hearing.

### **V.1.B. Type of Outreach that will be Made to Future Potential Students**

The most successful outreach activities described above to recruit the Dogwood's first students will also be used in future years. We will work to keep open a line of communication with the districts from which we enroll our students.

A Dogwood electronic newsletter will be developed to assist with community awareness of school events and activities. It will be distributed to local schools and to a variety of community organizations and social service agencies, and it will be available online via the school website.

Additionally, we will create a database of community groups, student services, and educational, government, and cultural organizations. They will be provided with printed material about the school, and their leaders and boards will be invited to information sessions. These sessions will also be publicized at community centers, in local newspapers, and in other media. In addition to these meetings, we will make our website and printed material, such as informational flyers, information request cards,

brochures, newsletters, student and family handbooks readily available and easily accessible.

## **V.2. Admissions Policy**

### **V.2.A. Enrollment Methods and Eligibility Criteria**

Dogwood will adhere to the requirements of Charter School Law (Section 1723-A) and will be open to all age-appropriate students from the Chartiers Valley School District and surrounding districts across the region. These students will be admitted on a first-come-first-served basis with the exceptions described below as permitted by Act 22.

Dogwood is committed to diversity and inclusion and to providing a high-quality, public education to any student who applies. After the granting of its charter, all interested families will be encouraged but not required to attend an Enrollment Open House to gather information about potential enrollment with the school. All children are welcome to apply for enrollment. Dogwood will have an open, non-discriminatory admissions policy (see Enrollment Policy in Appendix I), and will not discriminate on the basis of intellectual ability, athletic ability, disability, English language proficiency, race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, ancestry or any other protected class.

Parents or guardians must complete a student application (both paper and web-based versions will be available) by the established deadline and supply the documentation listed below in order to be eligible for admission. Where necessary, the Dogwood staff will provide information so that parents can obtain student records from their present schools. These items – while not conditions of enrollment – will ensure a smooth enrollment process:

- Birth certificate or other official documentation proving birth date
- Student Social Security Number
- Copy of existing I.E.P., NOREP and supporting documentation, if applicable
- Prior school records including academic, standardized test scores, attendance information
- Family “proof of residency” in the local district
- Act 26 Violations

No student will be denied the right to apply.

### **V.2.B. Timetable for Admission and Lottery Process**

A public lottery, which will be widely publicized in the school’s electronic newsletters, website, social media and printed enrollment materials, will be conducted by the school in April 2022 (and in February of subsequent years) if applications for enrollment exceed the number of available slots in any grade. All names will be put into grade level batches and drawn at random. The order in which the names are drawn establishes the list for enrollment and the waiting list. All families who submitted application forms for

the lottery will be informed of the results via letter. Students whose names are drawn to fill the grade openings will be mailed registration materials. The school will also contact the family by phone and/or email and will inform them of the deadlines established for the completion of the enrollment process. The following documentation is required for enrollment:

- Student Enrollment Form (signed)
- Immunization and Medical Forms (as required by law)
- Family Information Sheet
- Release Form for School Records (from sending school district)

The following documents will also be requested, but are not conditions of enrollment:

- Field Trip Permission Form
- Emergency Contact Form
- Photo and Video Authorization or Denial Form
- Signed and Dated Receipt of Parent Handbook & Student Code of Conduct
- Student Transportation Plan Form

If there is no response from the family within the established deadline, Dogwood will contact the family of the next student on the waiting list. When openings occur, wait-listed families are notified, in accordance with their “ranking,” and are given the opportunity to accept the space. Siblings of enrolled students will be given preference over other names on the waitlist. The wait list, which is formed by the lottery, will be valid for the academic year immediately following the lottery. Students who do not get placed and still want to enroll must submit a new application each year.

### **V.2.C. Policies of Exception**

There will be no exceptions for admission. Dogwood is a public school and as such will not discriminate against any student who applies. If more families apply than the number of slots available, students will be selected on a random basis by the lottery (see lottery description above).

## **V.3. Human Resource Information**

### **V.3.A. Description of Hiring Standards for Staff**

Teachers, administrators, and other school staff must be committed to the goals of Dogwood Charter School. We intend to hire educators who are certified by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in their area of expertise; past experience and demonstrated proficiency will also be considered.

Dogwood will employ professional staff who demonstrate a deep understanding of their academic area, are interested in working in a team environment, subscribe to the theory of the teacher as coach and facilitator in the delivery of instruction, are at least minimally literate in computer technology, and have a desire to continue their professional growth.

The Founding Coalition is developing a more detailed description of employment

qualifications for all staff. The Founding Coalition will advertise through local channels (paper and electronic) and professional publications. They will also distribute job announcements to local universities (pre-service teacher programs) and will ask relevant departments to refer qualified candidates.

Consistent with charter school regulations, at least 75% of the professional staff will meet the certification requirements for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is our intention to hire 100% of fully-certified staff in the first year, if possible. All new hires will be required to produce a criminal history record (pursuant to Section 11 of the Public School Code), an official clearance statement regarding child injury or abuse from the Department of Public Welfare as required by 23 Pa. C.S. Chapter 63 subchapter C.2 (relating to background checks for employment in schools) and an FBI Clearance (fingerprints).

The Board of Trustees will appoint the Founding Executive Director and Principal (Director of Education). The Board plans to employ these individuals no later than May 2022. The Executive Director will have the responsibility of recommending all other employees including teachers to the Board for its approval. In every case the Board and administration will adhere to all laws governing non-discriminatory practices in the workplace.

### **V.3.B. Targeted Staff Size and Teacher/Student Ratio**

It is the philosophy of the Dogwood Charter School to maintain an in-class student:teacher ratio of no more than 25:1. Grades K-5 will enroll no more than 20 per grade level, while grades 6-12 will enroll no more than 25 per grade level. However, with the additional professional staff that will be available to work with the students, the actual ratio will be approximately 8:1. The program of instruction and the rigor of the Charlotte Mason Curriculum will require an intensive and intimate educational setting. The staff chart displayed below in Section E clearly supports our commitment to making this happen.

### **V.3.C. Professional Development Opportunities Available**

Professional development will occur at the classroom level, the school level, and through opportunities provided to teachers and other school staff through outside organizations. All professional development activities will provide Act 48 credits for the staff. As indicated earlier, the Founding Coalition will make a significant commitment to the professional development and training of our staff so that they can successfully implement our instructional model. We will provide five (5) days of summer orientation and planning; five (5) days of professional development during the school year; weekly staff meetings; as well as a state-approved induction program for new staff.

**Classroom:** The school schedule will be developed so that all teachers at a given grade level will have common daily preparation and planning times. Teachers will be expected to use this time for curriculum development, problem solving, and examination of student progress through a review of assessment materials. Common planning time is essential to the success of the educational program. Teachers will also be compensated

to spend several weeks each summer developing curriculum, collecting materials, and working together to plan and coordinate thematic curriculum within and across grade levels.

School: Teachers in the school will gather as a full team on a weekly basis to discuss and develop plans for working on school-based issues and themes. They will, for example, be responsible for examining and modifying, as needed, the discipline code for the school, and to provide input for the school schedule, curriculum areas, assessment data, and operations.

External: Professional development funding will be provided to cover the registration and travel costs for teachers and administrative staff to attend various outside conferences, seminars, and workshops. Recipients of this funding will be expected to share what they have learned with their colleagues when they return, so that all staff can take advantage of the experience. Teachers and administrators will also have access to resources and programs presented through local colleges and universities, as well as Intermediate Units and PDE.

#### **V.3.D. Human Resource Policies**

Our first priority is to recruit and retain highly qualified individuals who believe in and actively support the mission and educational program of the school. The team structure described above and the active participation by both faculty and administration in planning professional development activities and other aspects of the instructional program will reinforce and strengthen the atmosphere of mutual trust, respect, and collegiality that are found in successful schools and provide a firm basis for staff retention and continuity.

Dogwood is developing policies and procedures to be used for establishing salaries, hiring, terminating, and determining benefits for all employees. Below is a description of the considerations that will go into establishing the policies:

- Salary: Shall be commensurate with qualifications and experience.
- Contracts: Employees will receive written contracts that describe their duties, terms of employment, compensation, benefits, etc., prior to the onset of employment. All contracts will be on an annual, at-will basis.
- Hiring: The school wishes to promote diversity and equal access to all categories of employment, including retention and professional advancement, and will ensure equal opportunity, without regard to age, gender, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, social or economic status, parenthood, marital status or handicap.
- Dismissals: Dogwood is an at-will employer. All decisions regarding dismissal will be made in the best interests of the school's students, and will be issued in writing with rationale articulated with as much advance notice as possible. All hires and dismissals must be Board-approved.
- Sick Leave/Personal Leave: The Board of Trustees shall provide sick leave and personal leave to full-time employees. The number of days will be determined at a later date.



- Medical Coverage: Full-time employees will be eligible to receive medical coverage commensurate with the coverage provided by the Chartiers Valley School District. The coverage shall include hospitalization, medical, prescription, dental and vision benefits. Employees will be responsible for the requisite level of co-pay and other obligations associated with the coverage.
- State Retirement: All employees will be enrolled in a PSERS-Alternative 403(b) Plan. Dogwood's Board of Trustees will match employee contributions up to 5% of Base Salary annually for each employee.

### **V.3.E. Identification of the Proposed Faculty**

To build a staff of teachers with the enthusiasm and open minds necessary to provide this innovative learning environment, the school will recruit a variety of individuals with a wide range of experience (both in industry and education), educational credentials, and interests. By offering an environment rich in creativity, resources, support, and student involvement, the school will attract qualified, innovative individuals who will work as a team towards the school's stated mission.

The school will use a number of resources in order to recruit the very best staff. Positions will be posted on widely used websites, at teaching institutions that promote progressive pedagogy, and in educational journals. The proposed faculty alignment is described in the chart below.

Staffing Chart

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>
Executive Director	1	1	1	1	1
Principal (Director of Educ)	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant Principal (Dir of C&I)	1	1	1	1	1
Administrative Assistant	1	1	1	2	2
Director of Org Development	0	1	1	1	1
Director of Special Ed	0	1	1	1	1
Custodian	1	1	1	1	1
Elementary Teachers (K-6)	7	7	7	7	7
MS ELA/SS (7-8)	1	1	1	1	1
HS ELA/SS (9-12)	0	1	1	2	2
MS STEM (7-8)	1	1	1	1	1
HS STEM (9-12)	0	1	1	2	2
K-12 PE/Health	1	1	1	2	2
K-12 Visual Arts	1	1	1	2	2
K-12 Perf Arts	1	1	1	2	2

K-12 Languages	1	1	1	2	2
Special Education	2	2	2	2	3
Karate Instructor	1	1	1	1	1
Classroom Assistants (K-2)	3	3	3	3	3
Therapist/Coach	1	1	1	1	1
Social Worker	1	1	1	1	1
Career Counselor (Guidance)	1	1	1	1	1
Nurse	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>

### **V.3.F. How School Will Ensure That All Staff Comply with Requirements for Criminal Record Checks Prior to Beginning Work**

As mentioned previously, all newly hired staff and volunteers will be required to provide the school with a completed Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance, a Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History Clearance and an original Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Criminal History Clearance (fingerprints). The school's administration will strictly enforce this policy and no employee or volunteer will be permitted to work or serve in the school without first providing valid, active copies of all three (3) clearances.

### **V.3.G. How the School Will Ensure That All Staff Will Comply with the Requirements for Student Abuse Clearances**

See the previous section. In addition to submitting a Pennsylvania State Criminal History Clearance and a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Criminal History Clearance, all staff must provide the school with their original, completed, current (within one year of submission date) Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance. These requirements are in accord with Section 111 of the Public School Code and 23 Pa. C.S. Chapter 63 subchapter C.2 from the Department of Public Welfare. No employee or volunteer will be permitted entry to classroom or student spaces or to work with students without first submitting these documents for inclusion in their official files. These files will be reviewed annually by the school's auditors to ensure full compliance.

## **V.4. Code of Conduct**

### **V.4.A. Rules and Guidelines Governing Student Behavior**

Dogwood will require all students and parents to sign a contract that specifies standards for acceptable behavior. This will be done as part of the formal orientation process. It is the general philosophy and deep belief of the Founding Coalition that a student cannot learn if he or she is not present in school. It is further believed that the actions of a minority of students should not interfere with the academic growth of their peers. To this end we will develop a full set of guidelines that will be in place in the rare instances

where they must be implemented for the “general health, welfare and safety” of both staff and students alike.

This contract will reflect the Code of Conduct can be amended by the Board of Trustees and the school administration with input from staff and parents. This will reflect the philosophy that an effective instructional program is built in an orderly environment in which students and staff know and abide by reasonable standards of socially acceptable behavior and respect the rights, person, and property of others. The contract will afford students and parents the opportunity to know what specifically is expected of them and what responsibility the school has in relation to implementation of the Code of Conduct. The Founders believe the school will be more successful in realizing its mission if everyone understands and agrees with a uniform Code of Conduct.

A complete Code of Conduct has been developed and will be amended and approved by the Board of Trustees prior to the enrollment of students. The Code of Conduct will comply with all applicable local, state, and federal rules and regulations, included as Appendix J.

All parents and students will receive a copy of the handbook and will have to sign a statement indicating that they understand the provisions of the Code of Conduct. This contract will be kept in the student’s file.

The Code of Conduct is designed with the mission of the school in mind, and, as such, is based on the belief that all students have the right to be physically safe, emotionally secure, and be taught effectively in a positive, focused learning environment.

The school administration will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Code of Conduct. The Board of Trustees, with feedback from the administrative team, parents, and faculty will continually review the Code of Conduct and make changes as necessary.

The Code of Conduct will include the following rules and guidelines governing student behavior:

- Students will attend school daily.
- Behavior will encourage an atmosphere of learning, sharing, and cooperating.
- Behavior will support and align to the school’s Mission and Values.
- Behavior and language will be civil and respectful at all times.
- Students will be free of illegal drugs, alcohol and weapons.
- Conduct will be respectful of all property, including school property, public property, and that of staff and other students.
- Students will abide by the dress code and maintain a clean appearance.

**See Appendix J – Dogwood Charter School Code of Conduct**

#### **V.4.B. School's Policies Regarding Student Expulsion and Suspension Including Students with Disabilities**

The school's Code of Conduct contains specific policies and procedures that describe the conditions under which violations of the Code will result in suspension or expulsion from the school. Students identified as "at risk," based on violations of the Code, will be referred to appropriate school staff for the development of a family-based intervention.

All due process requirements will be respectively followed for regular and special education students. In the specific case of students with disabilities, the guidelines established by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 and by subsequent court rulings will be carefully followed in order to fulfill total compliance. Manifestation hearings will take place in all serious offenses for which significant disciplinary action is being considered for these students to determine whether or not their disability is the causation of the negative action requiring administrative resolution. All attempts to rectify problems will be made before the implementation of sanctions.

#### **V.4.C. Mandatory Student Attendance Plan**

Attendance is one of the most significant factors that will lead to student success, both academically and socially. We will monitor student attendance carefully in order to determine when a student is starting to indicate some attendance problems. Lateness and absences must be minimized for all students. To this end, we will employ attendance software (via Skyward) that provides daily, weekly, and monthly reports on those students who are displaying irregular attendance and/or chronic absenteeism. Teachers will be required to report on any student who misses two or more consecutive days of school or who starts to develop a pattern of absences such as Fridays and Mondays or days before a holiday, etc. Follow-up will be done on a daily basis for each absence. Classroom teachers and/or a Counselor will be responsible to make contact with a parent or guardian to verify absences. When and if a student's absences continue, the school administration will start the process of bringing in the parents for a conference and to develop a plan to ensure that the student is meeting attendance requirements. Unexcused absences in excess of an established maximum will initiate Dogwood's Truancy Policy and could ultimately lead to expulsion. These policies and procedures are provided as attachments, and are summarized in the Code of Conduct and Student Handbook.

See Appendix J – Attendance Policy, Truancy Policy, and Expulsion Policy.

### **V.5. Transportation**

#### **V.5.A. Description of the transportation program**

In accordance with Pennsylvania Charter School Law, buses will be provided by a student's home school district for those students whose home school district's closest boundary is within 10 miles of Dogwood Charter School. School districts will not transport any students who do not live in their school district. Classes will begin at 9:00 a.m., and students will be required to arrive at school using bus transportation no later than 8:45 a.m. The normal school day will end at 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

Early release days will occur every Friday; on these days, students will be dismissed at 12 p.m. to allow teachers to meet for professional development and planning.

For those Dogwood students whose Individual Education Plans (IEPs) mandate transportation services, and who live outside of the previously noted 10-mile radius, DCS will contract with a private transportation provider to ensure that those mandated services are provided. This is reflected in the school's budget.

#### **V.5.B. Transportation for extended-day and extended year**

Dogwood will coordinate with local districts to provide transportation to those students who, by virtue of the goals in their IEPs, are entitled to an Extended School Year (ESY) plan. After school clubs and programs will be provided to students, and families of participating students will be responsible for picking up students and transporting them home. As noted in the previous section, for those students living outside of the 10-mile radius - and whose IEPs mandate ESY, Dogwood will assume financial responsibility for contracting with a private transportation provider.

#### **V.5.C. Transportation of non-residence students**

See previous sections. Non-resident students (those living outside of the 10-mile radius) will not be provided transportation under section 1361 of the local Public School Code. The school district of student residence must provide transportation to a charter school up to 10 miles from its border. Any DCS students not living within this area who do not have an IEP-mandated right to transportation will be required to provide their own transportation to the school.

### **V.6. Food Service**

#### **V.6.A. Student Food Services Plan**

Dogwood is absolutely committed to providing its students with fresh, healthy meals and in teaching the students the importance of a good diet, and will contract with Metz Food Service to provide daily breakfast and lunch to students. The school will be responsible for monitoring the health of students and when necessary will take steps to ensure that students failing to eat adequately will be provided with all necessary assistance.

The Board of Trustees will establish guidelines to ensure that no student is without appropriate meals as required by statute. The school will apply for and participate in the National School Lunch Program to provide free and reduced price meals to all eligible students. All other DCS students will have the option of purchasing a lunch provided by Metz (no revenues are assumed, however, in the school's Operating Budget) or of bringing their own lunches to school.

See Appendix I for a letter from Metz Food Service.

#### **V.6.B. Free and Reduced Lunches**

As mentioned previously, the school will work with Metz Food Service starting in Year 1 to provide meals for all students, and will participate in the Federal Free and Reduced Priced Breakfast/Lunch programs. Students who do not qualify for free meals may qualify for a reduced price. Students who are not eligible for a free breakfast or lunch program, or who choose not to participate will be expected to bring their own bag lunch and snacks. The school will investigate all possible free or reduced meal programs for all of its eligible students and will comply with all Commonwealth of Pennsylvania regulations. Students will eat during an assigned lunch period in the school's cafeteria space.

#### **V.7. Timetable**

This timetable has been developed to be implemented when we receive our approval for opening in September 2022:

Resubmission of application to District	11/15/2021
Public Hearing (if requested)	12/31/2021
Additional Public Hearings (if requested)	02/15/2022
Notification by District that charter has been granted	03/15/2022
Press Event announcing School	03/23/2022
Board of Trustees officially sworn in	04/01/2022
Administrators: Advertise for:	04/01/2022
Interviews Begin:	05/01/2022
Hire by:	06/01/2022
Office Staff:	
Advertise:	05/01/2022
Interview:	06/01/2022
Hire:	06/30/2022
Hire subsequent staff by:	07/31/2022
Public Relations:	10/01/2021 on-going
Student Recruitment:	10/01/2021 on-going
Advertise:	03/15/2022 on-going
Lottery	04/15/2022 on-going
Admit Notice	04/17/2022 on-going
Teacher Recruitment:	
Advertise:	05/01/2022
Interview:	06/01/2022 on-going
Hire by:	06/30/2022
Roster Classes:	08/01/2022
Site Selection and Renovations:	04/01 - 07/31/2022

## **V.8. Safety**

### **V.8.A. Plans to meet all safety requirements of the building selected as the school site**

It is the intention and commitment of Dogwood Charter School to fulfill all of the local, state, and federal health and safety laws and regulations as required. In our outline above, we have indicated that we will finalize the lease on our site and begin all necessary modifications and upgrades necessary on or before [April 1st, 2022]. We will submit all necessary requests for licenses and inspection approvals by [June 1st, 2022] and anticipate getting a Certificate of Occupancy by [July 31st, 2022]. These dates are also outlined as a part of our timetable for action.

Dogwood is further committed to providing a safe, orderly learning environment for its students. To make this a reality the Founding Coalition will develop a comprehensive school Safety Plan that incorporates the provisions of Act 26 and includes protocols for responding to crisis situations at Dogwood. Below is an outline of the steps that will be taken to finalize Dogwood's Safety Plan. The document will be reviewed and updated once the staff has been identified and hired in order to modify and change this plan to meet the "real" needs of the school, the facility, its staff and the community.

The steps that will be taken to review and modify the final safety plan include the following:

1. Form a School Safety Committee that includes: Board of Trustees; school administration, community representatives; and representatives of the local police and fire department and parents
2. Review Act 26, "The Safe Schools Act"
3. Review the local school districts safety plans to ensure accordance
4. Review safety plans from other municipalities for content and presentation ideas
5. Develop goals and timelines
6. Draft school safety plan
7. Circulate draft safety plan to the Board of Trustees, the school administration and community partners for review
8. Finalize the School Safety Plan

### **V.8.B. Maintaining School Safety and Reporting Act 26 Violations**

School safety will be the primary responsibility of the school administrator and his/her designee. They will oversee the security systems of the Dogwood as well as the behavior of the students and reporting Act 26 violations. In addition, all staff members will be expected to report to administration any inappropriate behavior in the school environment. It is the primary responsibility of staff to create a climate of respect and educational focus; however, they will also be "the eyes and ears of the building." Students will also be expected to set a tone of respect, order, and purposefulness. Particular responsibility will fall to staff to model good and safe behavior and to correct or report to the school administration inappropriate or unsafe behavior or events.

## **V.9. School Health Services**

### **V.9.A. Plan to provide school health services as required under Article XIV (PL Code)**

In total compliance with the State School Code, pursuant to charter school law, including Article XIV requirements, the Board of Trustees of Dogwood Charter School shall require that students submit to appropriate health and dental examinations to ensure that each student's health status is at an optimal level and that achievement is not lessened as a result of unresolved or undiagnosed health problems.

DCS has budgeted for a full-time, certified School Nurse to coordinate and provide Health Services. Every student attending Dogwood will be provided the following services by the school as detailed in the chart below.

(Please note that Special Education students will be provided all services as needed).

SERVICE	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
Medical Examination	x	x	x	x
Dental Examination	x	x	x	
Growth Screen	x	x		
Vision Screen	x	x	x	x
Hearing Screen	x	x		
Scoliosis Screen	x	x	x	x
Tuberculin Test (as needed)	x	x		
School Nurse Services	x	x	x	x
Maintenance of Health Record	x	x	x	x
Immunization Assessment	x	x	x	x

### **V.9.B. How the services will be provided**

For each student admitted to Dogwood, the school administrator or her/his designee (the Nurse) shall request an adequate health record from the transferring school.



The individual student records of health examinations shall be maintained as confidential records subject to statute and the policies of this school.

A student who presents a statement signed by his/her parent or guardian that a medical examination is contrary to her/his religious beliefs shall be examined only when the State Secretary of Health determines that the student presents a substantial health menace to the health of other persons.

Where it appears to school health officials or teachers that a student deviates from normal growth and development or where school examinations reveal conditions requiring health or dental care, the parent or guardian of the student shall be so informed, and a recommendation shall be made that the parent consult a private physician or dentist or a local community-based health center. The parent shall be required to report to the school the action taken subsequent to such notification.

Parents and guardians of students who are to be examined shall be notified of such examinations. The notice shall include the date and location of the examination, and the parent or guardian will be encouraged to attend. Such notice may also include notification that the parent may have the examination conducted privately at the parents' expense; encouragement that the parent does so in the interest of providing continuity in the student's health care; and, notification that the student may be exempted from such examination if it is contrary to the parents' religious beliefs.

The nurse will be ultimately responsible for overseeing the student health services program. These responsibilities will include the following:

The nurse shall instruct all staff members to observe students continually for conditions that indicate physical defect or disability and to report such conditions promptly to the nursing service.

The nurse will train the staff annually on Universal Health Precautions and basic First Aid techniques.

When the School Administration receives a report of the existence of a communicable disease in a student's family, the nurse must be notified. When the nurse discovers a student in school with a communicable disease, the nurse shall notify the school administrator immediately who will then provide for the reporting of this information as noted above.