



# Kestrel Heights School

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Dr. Mark Tracy - Executive Director

Office of Charter Schools Advisory Board Meeting Response

December 8, 2016

## **Kestrel Heights Response to the Office of Charter Schools Advisory Board**

### **Initial Identification of the Problem (July, 2016)**

- As the new high school principal (principal) transitioned into her role in July, she started with generating the master schedule based on rising seniors in order to make sure they would have the opportunity to graduate on time.
  - The school was transitioning from a block schedule to a traditional schedule and there was a need to ensure seniors had the opportunity to graduate on time
- During this master scheduling exercise, the principal identified several rising seniors (Class of 2017) who had issues and concerns:
  - One of the questions with rising seniors was the articulation of Durham Tech Community College (DTCC) courses English 111 and English 112 as replacements for high school English III and IV, respectively.
  - The principal researched this situation via online resources provided by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and DTCC, which clearly indicates the articulation for English III and IV.
  - The principal contacted the counselor and scheduled a meeting upon her return from summer break to discuss the school's understanding of this course articulation.

### **Audit of Transcripts (late July, 2016 through early September, 2016)**

- In late July, 2016, the principal also identified several students from the graduated Class of 2016 that may not have met all requirements; at this point, she informed the Executive Director of the concerns.
  - The Executive Director requested a preliminary audit of the Class of 2016 transcripts, and 20 transcripts were selected at random for further review.
  - The preliminary audit uncovered 6 of the 20 selected transcripts (30%) as having concerns relating to meeting graduation requirements.
  - Unfortunately, the principal could not identify the rationale for the missing credits based solely on her review of the transcripts. At this time, she and the Executive Director decided to discuss the individual cases with the counselor once she returned from vacation.

- In August, the principal, Executive Director, and counselor met to discuss the pre-audit to determine the rationale for the concerns.
  - During this meeting, the counselor was unable to provide the necessary information to resolve the missing credits.
  - Also during that meeting, the counselor provided information that required further research by the principal, including course code alignment, NCVPS, and documentation of Durham Tech articulation
  - A follow-up meeting was scheduled to complete the discussion once the principal investigated the new information
- Separately, the Executive Director also instructed the principal to complete a comprehensive review of all Class of 2016 graduates to determine the true extent of the issue.
  - The Executive Director informed the Executive Committee of the Board of the situation, and the plan to continue the investigation.
- In mid-August, the counselor took a leave for medical reasons; in early September, she submitted her resignation from the school. The resignation came prior to completing the full Class of 2016 investigation.
- In early-September, the comprehensive review of all Class of 2016 transcripts was completed, indicating 22 students had some level of issue or concern relating to graduation eligibility.

#### **Board of Directors Response (mid-September, 2016 – November, 2016)**

- At the September 13, 2016 Board of Directors meeting, the full Board of Directors was made aware of the situation. A special meeting was called to discuss how the organization would address this issue; the special meeting was held on September 22, 2016.
  - The results from the comprehensive audit were presented to the full Board and School Attorney, Stephon J. Bowens
  - The Board requested a second review to validate the findings of the audit.
    - Dr. Valarie Evans, a Board Member and retired Educator and Administrator at DTCC, was asked to conduct the validation. Dr. Evans was recently voted onto the Board at this time, and the Board agreed her second review would be impartial and confirm the accuracy of the review.
  - The Board agreed that, as the verification step was conducted, a resolution plan would be developed should the results prove accurate.
  - The Board also agreed to self-report the issue to the Office of Charter Schools of the findings and proposed resolution plan after verification.
  - The second review conducted by Dr. Evans of the initial audit of the Class of 2016 found no material or significant differences and confirmed 22 students impacted, with 25 total deficiencies noted.
- A letter to the OCS explaining the situation, and the proposed resolution, was sent the Director on October 3, 2016.

- The Board of Directors discussed immediately contacting students and starting the process of rectifying the situation.
  - There were questions raised about the potential OCS response. If OCS chose to mandate a different type of response or approach than recommended, moving forward with contacting students may unintentionally interfere with the intent of any OCS guidance.
  - In light of the internal questions raised, the Board decided to delay contacting students until guidance was provided from the Office of Charter Schools.
  
- The Office of Charter Schools scheduled a meeting on November 11, 2016 to discuss the letter.
  - At that meeting, the OCS informed the School to address the situation and keep the office informed of progress.
  - However, the OCS declined to provide any specific recommendation for resolution or a timeline to complete the process.
  
- On November 22, 2016 the KHS Executive Committee met to discuss the implementation of the plan that was presented to the Office of Charter Schools. At that meeting, concerns were raised about the original process based on what was in the best interest of the students.
  - While the original plan indicated a single path to resolution, the Board and Administration had time to recognize that it needed to do what was best for students, and think through viable solutions for students, some of whom may be:
    - Currently enrolled, or attempting to enroll, in a college or university
    - Planning to enter, or had entered, the military
    - Entering the workforce in a capacity requiring a Future Ready Core Degree
  - Based on this special meeting it was clear there would not be a “one-size fits all” solution.
  - To assist with navigating the complexity of this issue, the Board authorized securing the services of an external consultant, Dr. Thomas Miller, to help the Board navigate the next steps in the process.
  
- On November 29, 2016 the Executive Committee met to discuss next steps and finalize a revised plan taking the student concerns into account, and called a special meeting on December 1, 2016.
- On December 1, 2016 an emergency meeting of the Board of Directors was properly noticed and held to approve the Executive Committee’s proposed final plan. During the special meeting the Executive Director and New Upper School Principal, provided input to the Board regarding an educational ethical and administratively efficient manner to assist the students in question.

### **Implementation of Developed Plan**

- At the November 29, 2016 Executive Committee meeting, it was decided that a special meeting would be called for December 5 at 6:30 PM. The revised contact and resolution plan was scheduled to be shared with the Board of Directors.

- a. The principal to provide a review of which missing vs. taken courses align in order to provide credit for the courses that were missed. The principal also provided which courses do not have any alignment.
  - b. The board voted to allow students who had not taken and do not wish to take the missing course to obtain the Future Ready Core designation on their transcript to obtain a Kestrel Heights designation on their transcript, which requiring at least 22 high school course credits.
  - c. The Board would authorize the Executive Director to contact all effected students within the next 48 hours, and inform the students that a recent transcript audit uncovered missing credits required for graduation and to assist them in scheduling a time with the principal to determine the best course of action moving forward.
  - d. Kestrel Heights would offer impacted Class of 2016 students two tracks (1) a Future Ready Core designation or (2) Kestrel Heights-designation
  - e. For those impacted students choosing the Future Ready Core designation, they must:
    - Have taken a course in college that is aligned to the high school-level course;
    - Successfully complete credit recovery; or,
    - Take a course or tutoring for demonstrated mastery.
    - After a specified time period, if an identified student failed to respond to the multiple telephone calls and certified letters sent to the student then a final letter would be sent to the student disclosing that their transcripts will be converted to a Kestrel Heights designation
- On November 30, 2016 Attorney Bowens was contacted by the State Board of Education legal counsel, Katie Cornetto, who informed him that the State Board requested the school and its Board members to meet with the Charter School Advisory Board. As a result, the timeline and plan noted above was executed immediately following a December 1, 2016 emergency board meeting. This was five days ahead of the initial plan.
  - The course of action taken by the board provides immediate resolution of the gaps to Future Ready Core requirements for 4 of the 22 impacted students, pending contact with, and agreement by, the student.

**Results from Implementation Plan**

*From December 1 through December 6, 2016 the school has:*

- Contacted all students via phone
- Delivered a certified letter and a letter sent via traditional mail to each student impacted
- Results of the implementation of the plan are as follows:

<b>Type of Contact</b>	<b>Number of Occurrences</b>
Meetings Held	5
Meetings Scheduled	3
Phone Conference with Student	3
Left Voice Message with Student	3
Disconnected	7

\* Due to FERPA we could not inform parent of details

### **Avoiding Issues with Graduation Requirements in the Future**

- The following expectations have been implemented for the guidance counselor to adequately monitor and communicate graduation status throughout students' academic career with Kestrel Heights:
  - Use of a current and aligned program of study for all students grades 9-12
  - Meet with students in grades 9-11 no less than 2x per year - fall to review progress and plans, spring to plan the following year's schedule
  - Meet with seniors no less than 3x per year - fall to review progress and plans, winter to check-in, spring to confirm progress and address any lingering concerns
  - Parental involvement in all meetings (invite parents, parent signatures, etc.) will be encouraged and welcomed
- The Upper School Leadership team will meet monthly to review academic progress of all juniors and seniors to ensure that they are on track to meet the graduation requirements and offer alternatives to those students that are in jeopardy of not meeting those requirements
- The Upper School Principal or designee with the assistance of the counselor will review senior credit hours within the first 20 days of the new academic year, during Fall Break, and 20 days prior to graduation.