

V.A.

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**TO BE PROPOSED:**

April 6, 2016

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 9 of Public Act 15-239, An Act Concerning Charter Schools, approves the material changes to Elm City College Preparatory School's (ECCP) operations, including, (a) expanding the Greenfield educational model to include Grades 1-4 for the 2016-17 school year, and (b) moving Grades 5 and 6 from 495 Blake Street, New Haven, to join the ECCP elementary school at 403 James Street, New Haven, with the conditions delineated in the Commissioner's April 6, 2016, memorandum to the Board, "Approval of Material Changes to Elm City College Preparatory School Charter," and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of \_\_\_\_, this sixth day of April, Two Thousand Sixteen.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dianna R. Wentzell, Secretary  
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Hartford**

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** April 6, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Approval of Material Changes to Elm City College Preparatory School Charter

**Executive Summary**

**Introduction**

Elm City College Preparatory School (ECCP) is a state charter school located in New Haven serving 703 students in Grades K-12. The school seeks approval to expand its “Greenfield” educational model to include Grades 1-4 in the 2016-17 school year. Further, ECCP seeks approval to move Grades 5 and 6 from 495 Blake Street, New Haven, to join the ECCP elementary school at 403 James Street, New Haven. Currently, the school serves Grades kindergarten, 5 and 6 using the Greenfield educational model. The State Board of Education (SBE) approved this plan including a location change on August 13, 2015, for the 2015-16 school year. This executive summary serves as a progress report on the educational model and approval of material changes to the charter school.

In accordance with Section 9 of Public Act 15-239, An Act Concerning Charter Schools, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) seeks the SBE’s approval of these new material changes to the school’s operations as provided under state law.

**Background/Process**

Under Section 9 of Public Act 15-239, effective July 1, 2015, a process is established for charter school governing councils to follow when making a material change to their operations. A material change is one that fundamentally alters the school’s mission, organizational structure, or educational program, including:

1. Altering the educational model in a fundamental way.
2. Opening an additional school building.
3. Contracting for or discontinuing a contract for whole school management services with a Charter Management Organization.
4. Renaming a charter school.
5. Changing the charter school’s grade configurations.
6. Increasing or decreasing the total student enrollment capacity of the charter school by twenty percent or more.

To request a material change in the school's operations, the charter school's governing council must provide the SBE a written request to amend the school's charter. On February 18, 2016, the Commissioner received ECCP's written request to expand its Greenfield educational model to include Grades 1-4 in the 2016-17 school year and move Grades 5 and 6 from 495 Blake Street, New Haven, to join the ECCP elementary school at 403 James Street, New Haven (Attachment A). The Greenfield Model is designed to:

...help develop the best prepared students in the world. Achievement First's Greenfield schools will provide rigorous, high-quality instruction within a nurturing school community focused on developing self-motivated learners, problem-solvers and leaders. Students will benefit from more small group learning, greater access to technology, deep and meaningful enrichment opportunities (such as music, martial arts & STEM inventions), and extended field trips that allow students to go deeper in an area of interest and experience hands-on learning in more authentic and engaging ways.

*([www.afgreenfieldschools.org/](http://www.afgreenfieldschools.org/))*

ECCP and Achievement First (AF) spent the first six months of the 2015-16 school year implementing and refining the Greenfield model to ensure its students receive high-quality instruction and a positive learning environment. Attachment A provides a synopsis of self-reported academic gains, 2015-16 rollout of the educational model, lessons for improving AF instruction and sharing results of the model pursuant to the fourth condition of the SBE's August 13, 2015, approval.

### **Site Visit**

On February 24, 2016, CSDE staff visited the ECCP kindergarten program on James Street and the Grade 5-6 program on Blake Street. The visits included school tours, classroom observations and interviews with teachers and administrators regarding the development, implementation and operation of the school. The two facilities appeared safe, well maintained and appropriately designed to support quality teaching and learning. Two kindergarten classroom visits revealed students and teachers engaged in small and large group reading instruction. Lead (experienced) teachers conducted large group instruction while associate (year one and two) teachers instructed small groups. Dependent on student ability, small group reading instruction was differentiated, with some students involved in guided reading led by an associate teacher, some students receiving letter recognition and letter phonics, and other students involved in independent reading using Chrome Books or printed books. A resource room was used to provide special education services to identified students. A New Haven Public School occupational therapist was also observed assisting a student with special needs during a lesson. Students appeared engaged, while teachers were active, stimulating and maintaining student attention.

Middle school classrooms appeared orderly with students generally on task and engaged. Each classroom had one lead teacher and one or two associate teachers, depending on the area of study. Students were observed using Chrome Books to complete Student Directed Learning (SDL) (independent study) using their Personalized Learning Platforms (PLP) as a guide supported by an associate teacher. Lead teachers were instructing mathematics, reading and writing classes with one or two associate teachers providing student support. Teachers appeared

to keep students working and on task. Students were engaged on assignments requiring application of knowledge, skills and critical thinking. CSDE staff observed three elective classes, a dance class, Tae Kwon Do and music where students were also on task.

### **Teacher Interviews**

CSDE staff interviewed a music and STEM teacher. Both indicated they had received sufficient professional development prior to entering the classroom, including one month of professional development on the Greenfield model prior to the start of the school year. Both were satisfied that they had a voice in the administration of the school. Teachers expressed excitement over the start of the Dream Teams. Dream Teams are student conferences that include family members, community members important to the student's life, the student and Goal Coach (teacher advisor). The Dream Teams meet quarterly in student-led conferences to discuss the student's individual goals and review success and methods to provide support in meeting the goals of the model. According to teachers, Dream Teams provide students ownership in their education and commitment to meeting personal goals while providing the involvement of family and community to support the goals of the program. The teachers expressed support of the model and anticipate improvements in student achievement and behavior as a result of the Dream Teams.

### **Administrator Interviews**

CSDE staff interviewed the principals of Greenfield Middle and Elm City Middle schools. The Greenfield principal reported the school was in full operation. Each middle school grade consists of three classes of approximately 24 students totaling 145 students. One hundred twenty of the students were enrolled in ECCP in the 2014-15 school year. Following the August 2015 approval of the Greenfield model, an open lottery was conducted to enroll 24 new students from the City of New Haven. The school schedule has been revised with some adjustment from the original 10 hours to nine hours a day. Staff development occurred during the summer of 2015 and teachers receive additional professional development on Friday afternoons. Administration meets weekly to discuss program implementation and needed adjustments. Deans and teaching staff also participate in these discussions. The principal lauded the rollout of the Dream Team process with the expectation of its positive impact on student achievement and behavior. The principal reported that the school's relationship with New Haven Public Schools allows for a smooth transition of special education students into the school. The curriculum includes four one-week expeditions which provide students with enrichment activities and support the development of critical thinking skills. A Development Team has been established to align the Greenfield curriculum to the Connecticut State Standards. Curriculum has been established for Grades K, 5 and 6, and lesson plans are developed and provided to teachers four weeks prior to use. The Development Team is currently developing the curriculum for Grades 1-4.

### **Host District Comments**

In addition to reviewing the written request, Public Act No. 15-239 requires the SBE to solicit (Attachment B) and review comments on the request from the local or regional board of education in the district where the charter school is located (New Haven), and vote on the request within 60 days of receiving the request or as part of the charter renewal process. As of March 14, 2016, the New Haven Board of Education had not responded. However, as part of ECCP's

original request in August 2015, the Board Chair and Superintendent of New Haven Public Schools co-signed a letter of support, which is attached (Attachment C).

### **Recommendation with Conditions**

During the site visit, CSDE staff reviewed a successfully launched Greenfield program in full operation. The facilities were safe, well maintained and appropriately designed to support quality teaching and learning. Students appeared actively engaged in learning. Classrooms were sufficiently staffed and supplied to meet student needs. Instruction was differentiated including the use of small and large group instruction. Dream Teams were optimistic that the community involvement and student ownership in realizing personal goals will positively impact student achievement and behavior. While it is early, self-reported student data appears to show promise of the educational model. All students have engaged in alternative student assessments and on average all grades appear to have exhibited growth in math and reading, based on self-reported data. Also, as reported by the school, average daily student attendance year to date is slightly higher than last year. Administration indicated that the planning for next year's expansion is underway, including staffing, budgeting and curriculum development.

Based on the school's written request, site visit findings and host district approval, CSDE recommends, with conditions, the following:

1. Pursuant to Section 9 of Public Act 15-239, the SBE approve ECCP's request to expand the Greenfield Model to include Grades 1-4 in the 2016-17 school year. CSDE will evaluate progress of the new model as part of ECCP's charter renewal in the 2016-17 school year.
2. The SBE approves the move of Grades 5 and 6 from 495 Blake Street, New Haven, to join the ECCP elementary school at 403 James Street, New Haven. ECCP will be required to obtain and deliver to the Charter School Office all necessary local building, fire, and health permits and a Certificate of Occupancy prior to the first day of the 2016-17 school year.
3. Pursuant to Section 2(d) of Public Act No. 15-239, ECCP include a plan to share student learning practices and experiences with the local or regional board of education of the town in which the charter school is located. ECCP has agreed to do so as part of its request for a modification to its charter.

Prepared by: Robert E. Kelly, Charter School Program Manager  
Bureau of Choice Programs

Reviewed by: Mark Linabury, Chief  
Bureau of Choice Programs

Approved by: Charlene Russell-Tucker  
Chief Operating Officer



February 18, 2016 (AMENDED 3/24/16)

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell  
 Commissioner of Education  
 State Department of Education  
 PO Box 2219  
 Hartford, CT 06145

Dear Commissioner Wentzell:

I write on behalf of Elm City College Preparatory (“ECCP” or the “School”) to request approval of a material change to the School’s charter. ECCP seeks to continue and expand the grades benefiting from our “Greenfield” educational model that enhances and refines many systems and processes previously in place at ECCP. Specifically, the School seeks to continue using this design in kindergarten, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and move forward with implementing this design in 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The School and Achievement First (“AF”) have spent the first six months of this school year implementing and refining the Greenfield design to achieve maximum benefit to ensure our students are receiving high-quality instruction in a positive school environment. The design continues to focus on achieving four outcomes: accelerated academics, habits of success, excellence in enrichment, and student, family and staff motivation. We are eager to expand this model as we believe its application will benefit our scholars, our school community, and, hopefully, other members of the Connecticut education community. Please see Exhibit A for the resolution from the School’s Board of Directors approving this charter revision request.

**I. Academic Gains**

While it is too early in the school year to have conclusive academic data, we have early results from the Fountas & Pinnell (F&P) reading assessment for kindergarten and the nationally normed STAR Reading and STAR Math assessments in grades 5 and 6. All students were given a pre-test in the fall (late August/early September) when they started school and on average every grade exhibited strong growth on the winter test (mid-December/mid-January).

On the F&P assessment, between our first and third testing cycles, the percentage of Elm City Greenfield kindergarteners at the proficient or advanced levels increased 26% to a proficiency rate of 95%, which is the highest among AF’s schools in Connecticut.

403 James Street  
 New Haven, CT 06513  
 203 773 3223



335 Adams Street, Suite 700  
 Brooklyn, NY 11201  
 718 623 2660

<b>Kindergarten Reading F&amp;P Assessment</b>				
	<b>% Proficient/Advanced</b>			
	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Growth % Pts</b>	<b>Growth %</b>
<b>Elm City College Prep Greenfield K</b>	75.00%	94.64%	19.64	26%

On the STAR Math assessment, Elm City Greenfield scholars had the highest scaled score point growth of any middle school in the AF network between the beginning-of-year and middle-of-year test, and middle-of-year scores were the highest for all 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the AF CT network.

<b>STAR Math Growth in Scaled Scores 5th and 6th Grade</b>			
	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Growth %</b>
AF Bridgeport MS	620.9	638.3	2.8%
AF Hartford MS	608.2	630.1	3.6%
AF Summit MS	616.3	651.2	5.7%
Amistad Academy MS	660.1	685.7	3.9%
<b>Elm City College Prep Greenfield MS</b>	<b>636.2</b>	<b>677.8</b>	<b>6.5%</b>

Similarly on STAR Reading, Elm City Greenfield scholars exhibited the strongest growth and highest average Lexile score among AF CT schools.

<b>STAR Reading Growth in Lexile Score - 5th and 6th Grade</b>			
	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Growth %</b>
AF Bridgeport MS	519.8	566.2	8.9%
AF Hartford MS	518.8	572.9	10.4%
AF Summit MS	521.9	599.1	14.8%
Amistad Academy MS	598.9	662.7	10.7%
<b>Elm City College Prep Greenfield MS</b>	<b>528.1</b>	<b>683.3</b>	<b>29.4%</b>

While it is too early to draw any definitive conclusions, the early data above demonstrates significant growth in Elm City Greenfield scholars in math and ELA, and is therefore encouraging.

## **II. The 2015-16 Rollout**

As previously described, the 2015-16 Greenfield model is in place in kindergarten and 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. This split level approach in the inaugural year has proven important in identifying the

model's strengths and areas requiring further development. For instance, elements like dedicated self-directed learning blocks have proved more challenging to implement at the middle school grades than in kindergarten.

Supporting the overall theme of students taking increased responsibility for their learning and doing more of the heavy lifting, kindergarten self-directed learning blocks are showing great promise in building executive functioning in our youngest scholars. At the middle school levels, experience showed that the large group self-directed learning groups were less effective before clear common expectations for classroom routines were established. As a result, self-directed activities are being integrated into core academic and enrichment periods.

Also in Humanities and Science at the middle school level, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders are able to leverage content modules known as "online playlists" as ways to master content in a self-directed mode. While self-directed learning is not designed to be solely computer-based via the Personal Learning Platform (PLP), the method has proven effective with this age group.

Goal Teams and Dream Teams have had the desired effects of building strong community, not only among student peers and teachers, but also strengthening the school community as it extends between school and families at home. In kindergarten, our focus on Habits has similarly built and strengthened community.

We have experienced success with power of immersive learning experiences during the Expeditions aspects of the model. The process of "making" can be richly explored during expeditions in a way that is not possible during a regular schedule. Kindergarten expeditions took place in December and covered world traditions using the winter holidays as a theme. The "making" element for kindergarten students involved a visual arts performance task, and lesson included world language study in French, Italian and Japanese. Middle School students choose among 3D Design, Ceramics, Living Ancestry, Shakespeare Theatre, or a sampler that included Debate, Photography, and 3D Design. Habits of success were in strong evidence in the form of curiosity, teamwork, and drive. Teachers observed that a variety of students stood out during expeditions as feeling they had achieved different versions of success.

The sense of community and student investment in their learning has resulted in strong culture metrics in the Greenfield grades at Elm City College Prep. For instance, attendance rates in the three Greenfield grades (K, 5, and 6) are up approximately 0.5 percentage point overall relative to last year, to an average of 97.2% year-to-date.

Elm City College Prep has historically had lower suspension rates than other schools in the AF network, and that trend is continuing at Elm City Greenfield. Only 17 students in the Greenfield grades have received an ISS or OSS year-to-date, compared to 35 students at the same grades at Amistad Academy, resulting in suspension rates of 8.2% and 12.3%, respectively.

Finally, Elm City Greenfield grades have experienced minimal attrition year-to-date. Only two students have withdrawn from the grades offering the Greenfield model, both for what the School considers “acceptable” reasons (one family moved out of town and the other family moved out of state).

### III. Lessons for Improving AF Instruction

As has been planned from the initial design phase of AF Greenfield, the intent is that scholars at all AF schools will ultimately benefit from our Greenfield experiences. The most promising elements for integration to other AF schools, as informed by our experiences to date, are:

- **Goal Teams** provide a framework for students to take an active role in charting their educational course while at the same time building community with and among teachers, parents, and students.
- **The common language around habits** enables teachers to support one another and provides them with the opportunity to encourage students to solve problems on their own before asking for help.
- **Student Directed Learning (SDL) as a mode of instruction** as opposed to a dedicated instructional block. Other schools in the network should benefit from the power of SDL while providing the necessary scaffolding to students and without rescheduling the school day.

We also expect that AF schools as well as our district peers to learn from some of the challenges and alterations we have found necessary in the first half of this school year. Among those challenges and alterations are:

- **Schedule shift #1:** In middle school, instead of having large SDL blocks, we changed to build SDL blocks into core academic and enrichment times to allow for smaller SDL groups in a rotation model. This has increased tutoring and coaching during SDL time, which has resulted in higher student focus and mastery. We also increased goal team time to allow for 30-45 minutes of SDL within goal teams which increases Goal Coach awareness of each student’s success and gaps and builds team. In kindergarten, we have gone from rotational to block scheduling in order to increase routine and reduce complexity.
- **Schedule shift #2:** As of December 2015, we switched our school day back to 9 hours. This did not have any significant impact on the core components of the model.
- **Common Picture:** We have tightened up on common picture and the requisite coaching and practice with teachers on taxonomy moves which has resulted in higher levels of basic focus and engagement.
- **Expeditions:** we have reduced the length of Expeditions from 2 weeks to 1 week for this year.

The Greenfield model, combined with the foundation of Achievement First's existing approach, further strengthens the quality of instruction today and promises to have a significant impact on our scholars' success in the future

#### **IV. Sharing Our Results**

Although the School has primarily focused on implementing the Greenfield model, it has already taken steps to share its experiences with the local school district, New Haven Public Schools (NHPS). Residents in the Residency Program for School Leadership, AF's partnership with NHPS that helps train principals and assistant principals for the district, conducted a half-day visit to the Greenfield grades during the fall to observe classes and discuss the model with the principal and other school leaders. In addition to repeating this next year, AF expects to place a resident from the Residency Program at the School next year – this person will be fully embedded as a member of the leadership team at the School for the first half of the school year. Additionally, a member of the New Haven Board of Education sits on the School's Board and therefore receives regular progress reports regarding the Greenfield model.

#### **V. Charter Amendment**

The Board of Elm City College Preparatory hereby requests the following amendment to the existing charter as currently amended:

1. The expansion of the Greenfield model to encompass grades 1 – 4 in addition to continuation of the model for kindergarten and grades 5 and 6. This change will enable the school to build a seamless seven grade continuum of the Greenfield model. Note that grades 5 and 6 will move from 495 Blake Street to join the ECCP elementary school at 403 James Street. The combining of all Greenfield grades in a single building will enable the leveraging of a robust leadership and instructional team for implementation.

Please let me know if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Peter Cymrot  
Senior Counsel,  
Achievement First



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



February 23, 2016

Mr. Garth Harries  
Superintendent of Schools  
New Haven Public Schools  
54 Meadow Street  
New Haven, CT 06519-1743

Dear Mr. Harries:

Section 9 of Public Act 15-239 provides for the governing council of a state or local charter school which plans to make a material change in the school's operations for the governing council of the charter school to submit, in writing, a request to amend the school's charter to the State Board of Education. A material change is a change that fundamentally alters a charter school's mission, organizational structure or educational program, including, but not limited to, (1) altering the educational model in a fundamental way, (2) opening an additional school building, (3) contracting for or discontinuing a contract for whole school management services with a charter management organization, (4) renaming the charter school, (5) changing the grade configurations of the charter school, or (6) increasing or decreasing the total student enrollment capacity of the charter school by twenty percent or more.

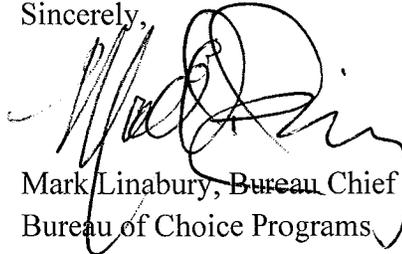
Under its "Greenfield" model, Elm City College Preparatory (ECCP), a state charter school located in New Haven made a request to the Commissioner to include Grades 1-4 in its school beginning in 2016-17. Currently, the school serves grades kindergarten, grade 5 and 6 using the Greenfield model. In addition, grades 5 and 6 will move from 495 Blake Street to join the ECCP elementary school at 403 James Street.

Based on the foregoing, the State Department of Education is required to solicit and review comments on this request from the local or regional board of education of the town in which the charter school is located, New Haven.

Mr. Garth Harries  
February 23, 2016  
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I look forward to your written response by **March 8, 2016**. Should you have any questions, please contact Robert Kelly, Charter School Program Manager, at 860-713-6574. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Linabury', written over a printed name and title.

Mark Linabury, Bureau Chief  
Bureau of Choice Programs

ML:rkc

cc: Robert Kelly, Charter School Program Manager  
Felicia Canty, Choice Office Liaison



New Haven School Change  
NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Garth Harries  
Superintendent

Tel: 203-936-5200  
Fax: 203-946-7300

August 5, 2015

Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell  
Connecticut State Department of Education  
P.O. Box 2219  
Hartford, CT 06145

Dear Commissioner Wentzell,

We understand that you are considering whether to approve a proposed amendment to Elm City's charter to implement their new "greenfield" design in several grades within their existing school. We are writing in support of that proposal, for three reasons:

First, the proposed classroom and educational design recommends integrating important components of academic and social-emotional learning, and can lead to greater engagement, more progress, and deeper learning for students served by Elm City. The different modalities of instruction (including more small group instruction, experiential learning, and self-directed learning) are promising approaches toward greater student engagement in more clearly articulating and working, regularly, on achievement of their goals. These changes respond to gaps in Elm City's existing model, and could well provide lessons for instruction across the AF network. More broadly, the model responds to the national call for innovation in classroom instruction, and can potentially provide lessons for other schools and districts.

Second, as you likely know, there was much controversy surrounding the failed proposed partnership between the New Haven Public Schools and Achievement First (AF). That controversy centered, mostly, on the partnership aspects being proposed and the projected district financial contribution, and less on the educational model. Most critics of AF were interested in the progressive shifts embodied by the educational model, now proposed for implementation in existing AF classrooms instead of in a partnership with the New Haven Public Schools.

Finally, Achievement First communicated with families enrolling in the classrooms that are being converted to the Greenfield Design. In New Haven, charter school students enroll through our district lottery and enrollment process, so we see their communications and have a sense of family choice. Achievement First communicated often with families who were considering enrolling at Elm City to be sure they understood the Greenfield Model that would be implemented, including both written materials and workshop sessions. Therefore, changes to the educational model are best understood by those most affected – the students, families, and teachers that will implement them.

For these reasons, we believe you should support the transition of educational model that Elm City is pursuing. Please reach out to us if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

New Haven Board of Education  
Affirmed by unanimous vote on August 5, 2015

Carlos Torre, President  
New Haven Board of Education

Garth Harries, Superintendent  
New Haven Public Schools