

John de la Howe School

192 Gettys Road - McCormick, SC 29835 - (864) 391-0414

Progress Report to the Governor and Legislature

October 1, 2014

The John de la Howe School provides an array of therapeutic and educational services in a rural farm setting in McCormick County for children and youth with emotional and behavioral challenges from throughout the state. The agency provides at-risk children a safe place to heal, grow and make lasting changes. This report describes steps taken by the Board and staff of the John de la Howe School since the June 30, 2014, progress report to the Governor and Legislature.

Reports Submitted. Demonstrating considerable hard work and team effort, the following reports have been filed within the September 15 to October 1, 2014, deadlines:

1. Annual Accountability Report, including strategic plan and outcome measures, submitted to the Executive Budget Office.
2. "District" strategic plan, including strategic plan and outcome measures, submitted to the Department of Education.
3. Five-year school renewal plan with outcome measures, submitted to the Department of Education.
4. Response on Proviso 7.5, including response on the Inspector General's report and budget request justification, submitted to the Governor and Legislature.
5. Budget request for FY 2015-2016, submitted to the Executive Budget Office.
6. This quarterly progress report, submitted to the Governor and Legislature.

Strategic Planning. In August and September, the agency hosted stakeholder planning meetings involving more than 20 representatives of other state agencies, local schools, parents and alumni and community representatives. The Board of Trustees held a strategic planning workshop, and staff continued to refine the strategic planning documents. The agency is currently focused on implementing the new strategic plan.

Enhanced Education Offerings. The new school session began August 19. As a result of the strategic planning process the L.S. Brice School is preparing to implement educational offerings that will focus on work skills preparation. An AgScience curriculum will provide opportunities for students to learn different manual skills such as carpentry, painting, small engine repair, basic plumbing and electricity, welding, and ornamental horticulture.

Grants for Arts Programming. A grant for \$7,000 has been awarded from the South Carolina Arts Council for Arts in Education for Youth at Risk. An application is pending with the Department of Education for an Arts Curricular Innovation Grant. The partnership with the McCormick Arts Council (The MACK) is preparing programming for the new school year.

DSS Licensing Renewal. The agency successfully completed the extensive annual facilities licensing review by the Department of Social Services.

New Director of Student & Family Services Hired. Mr. Adrian Cartledge joined John de la Howe School as Director of Student & Family Services in September, replacing Dr. Webb, who was hired as the agency head. Mr. Cartledge returned home to his native McCormick from Nashville, TN, where he was with Omni Vision, which serves Level III boys and girls with severe emotional disturbance. Prior to that he was with Woodbridge Behavioral Care, working with Level III boys and girls in both Tennessee and Arkansas. A graduate of South Carolina State University, he holds an MBA from Delta University and is currently working toward a Master's degree in conflict resolution, also from Delta University.

Technical Assistance. Since March, Brenda Hart, Deputy Director of the Budget Division of the Budget and Control Board, and the leadership of the Office of Federal and State Accountability at the Department of Education have been providing helpful assistance. In response to a legislative proviso, on July 9 the State Board of Education confirmed Ms. Meka Childs to a temporary four-month appointment with a title of chief operating officer to provide guidance and technical assistance to the Board of Trustees and senior management.

Student Enrollment and Capacity. The agency anticipates completing deferred maintenance on two additional cottages and opening a third Wilderness camp by the end of December, providing an additional 24 beds, for a total of 88. Once approved for licensing by DSS, these facilities will be ready to begin accepting additional residential students. The agency reached an optimal occupancy level this past year with an average of 55 residential students. That number is projected to grow to 72 in the current year. Optimal occupancy means the agency is maximizing the number of licensed beds commensurate with DSS-mandated staffing ratios for 24/7 supervision of youths.

Funding is being requested for staffing to serve an additional 16 residential students in FY 2015-2016, with an option to serve a total of 32 additional students. Staffing ratios must meet DSS licensing requirements, so it is most cost effective to plan for additional sets of 16 residential youths. The agency is prepared to move forward with all due haste to accommodate as many children as possible in the shortest time possible.

The agency renewed its memorandum of agreement with Abbeville County School District to continue providing education and counseling for its alternative education students. These day students are bused to campus.

Facility Repairs. The agency is moving ahead with repairs to four cottages. Funding is in place and authorization has been received to proceed with replacement of the roof, ceiling and plumbing of the school's cafeteria. An engineering firm is preparing specifications for bids to be solicited in January. Work is expected to be completed by June.

The same engineering firm is beginning its needs assessment for replacing the roof on the Administration Building, and the current fund balance will be used to replace the roof once the procurement process is completed. This is a matter of some urgency to minimize further risk to furnishings, equipment and staff in this building. This Administration Building has not been renovated since 1971 (43 years).

Alumni Relations. The alumni will hold their biennial reunion on campus on October 11 for a full day and evening of activities. Along with community volunteers, they also provided strong support during the August 9 Beautification Day to clean up the campus and during the September 6 Dairy Festival conducted as an annual community event.

Legislative Tours. Senators from the Senate Finance Subcommittee on K-12 Education and others are scheduled to tour the campus in October. Representatives from the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Special Schools and others plan to schedule a tour in November. A tour date is being scheduled for the State Board of Education as well.

Future Reports. This progress report is being communicated primarily via email. If you would like to receive a hard copy of this or future reports, please advise.

The John de la Howe School will be providing periodic updates on progress in implementing changes. Staff members are also available to answer questions and to schedule meetings. Please contact Dr. Dan Webb at 864-391-0414 or via email at danny.webb@delahowe.k12.sc.us.

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