Upper Darby Academy Charter School

Supplement of Applicant in Response to Questions Raised During the January 10, 2024 Site Visit

January 24, 2024

(Questions appearing in this document were excerpted from the transcript of the site visit. In some cases, the questions are combined, reworded for clarity/brevity, or paraphrased. Note that, where a question was clearly answered during the interview, the applicant has not included it below. Responses are italicized.)

1. What is the Applicant's plan to improve pupil learning in the Upper Darby community? 12:14-15.

This question is addressed in the site visit transcript from 13:4-18:2. It is also addressed at the core of the application narrative, in particular on pages 8-11 and 77-80.

2. What is the plan to improve student attendance and reduce absenteeism? 44:13-14.

This question is addressed in the discussion in the site visit transcript from 44:17-46:7. It is also addressed in the application on pages 10 and 124-125.

3. What type of discretion does the principal have to excuse absences? 45:10-11. How can you improve attendance/have the principal excuse absences in a manner compliant with the school code and state requirements? 45:25-46:7, reworded, see also 48:11-13

Under Chapter 11 of the PA School Code, "(a) A principal or teacher may, upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of mental, physical or other urgent reasons, excuse a student for nonattendance during a temporary period, but the term "urgent reasons" shall be strictly construed and does not permit irregular attendance. A school district shall adopt rules and procedures governing temporary excusals that may be granted by principals and teachers under this section. Temporary excusals may not exceed 3 months." Accordingly, the governing Board of the school will adopt an appropriate policy in accordance with this statute upon approval of its charter.

4. Do you have a proposed daily schedule for students? 57:18-20.

The UDACS school day will begin at 8 am and end at 3 pm. The two-hour delay schedule will begin the school day at 10:00 am and end at 3:00 pm. The early dismissal school schedule will begin at 8:00 am and end at 3:00 pm.

As compared to district schools, the regular school day at UDACS will provide 35 additional minutes of instructional time for elementary students and 20 additional

minutes of instructional time for middle school students. This will allow for nearly three additional hours per five-day week in elementary school and more than one-and-a-half additional hours for middle school. This additional time will be used for supplemental computer science integration.

5. Do you have any evidence/proof of concept of this plan that you have for the model for your school/computer science-based model? 73:23-25, reworded. Have you or anyone who's part of the team talked to any of the other 3-5 schools that have this type of model and have run it successfully? 75:3-6.

Successful computer science-integrated models were researched from schools around the country. There were 21 schools researched and studied during the development of the UDACS proposal. Of those, the following eight schools provided the most valuable insights and case studies.

Sandlapper Elementary School, Columbia, SC- K-5, Computer Science Immersion program.

McKissick Academy of Science and Technology PK-5, Easley, SC – STEM-Science Technology Engineering and Math.

Alexander Fleming Middle School, STM Magnet, Lomita, CA – School of Distinction Grades: 6-8 Themes: Science, Technology, and Math.

Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School, Waterbury, CT – K-5 school with multicultural and science/technology theme. Technology is enhanced through the use of *Engineering is Elementary* (EiE).

Ben Sheppard Magnet Elementary School, Hialeah, FL – K-5 STEM, content thematically tied to basic scientific and mathematical research, methodology, and science applications through project-based learning. Focus: scientific inquiry, research techniques, and the production of scientific lab reports and hands-on science experiments.

Riviera Middle, Miami, FL – 6-8, Science Technology, Imagineering, Robotics (STIR) and Multimedia Industry Xperience (MIX) with themes of Art, Animation, Film Production, Graphic Arts, Game Development, Robotics, Science, Technology.

Westdale Heights Academic Magnet, Baton Rouge, LA – K-5, Magnet Theme of Academics with a focus on Environmental Science, Mathematics, and Technology.

McClintock Middle School, Charlotte NC – STEAM theme (86% minority, 98.4% free lunch)

6. How many classes per grade level do you plan to have beginning in year one all the way through year five? 94:12-14.

Following is a five-year enrollment chart:

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Year Five
Kindergarten	25	50	75	100	125
1st Grade	25	50	75	100	125
2nd Grade	25	50	75	100	125
3rd Grade	25	50	75	100	125
4th Grade	25	50	75	100	125
5th Grade	25	50	75	100	125
6th Grade	25	50	75	75	100
7th Grade	25	25	50	75	75
8th Grade		25	25	50	75
TOTAL	200	400	600	800	1000

7. With an estimate of 25 students per class, how do you get to the staff to student ratio in the application of 10 to 1? 96:13-22.

This question is addressed by the discussion in the site visit transcript from 96:24-97:19.

8. How long is your school day? What time do you start and finish? 97:21.

As stated above in response to question four, the school day begins at 8 am and ends at 3 pm.

9. Have you made a decision on the Act 80 requirements? What is the charter school going to do regarding Act 80? 99:1-3.

As per Section 1715-(A)(9) of the Pennsylvania School Code, charter schools may fulfill the requirements known to traditional public school administrators as "Act 80 requirements," by providing annually: 900 hours of instruction for elementary students and, 990 hours of instruction for secondary students. Under this provision, charter schools do not have a requirement for 180 days of attendance.

(The reviewers may not be aware that on December 14, 2023, the Pennsylvania Governor signed Act 56, allowing traditional public schools to also choose whether to comply with the sum hour-requirement or sum day-requirement.)

UDACS plans to have 1,000 hours of student instruction (5 hours and 40 minutes per day) for secondary students and 960 hours (5 hours and 20 minutes of instruction per day) for elementary students. This instructional time is taken from the seven hours students are present in school each day.

10. When will English language learners be provided with direct instruction in English language development within their daily schedule? 58:4-8.

The daily schedule for EL and other student-specific services will be determined based on the enrollment and the numbers, grade levels and specific accommodations required by the students enrolled.

Special Education, Computer Science Curriculum Integration, Integrative Technology

11. How does the Applicant plan to make its computer science and coding program available to students of varying academic levels who might lack the foundational skills necessary to participate in these types of programs? 18:9-13. How would that work in, like, an English class or a social studies class? 22:17-18. What about if you're starting with a fifth-grade classroom and you have differing levels of experience and skill sets in older students? 21:2-7. In what classes do you anticipate this unique program will be utilized throughout the day? Will it only be in science classes, or do you plan to integrate it into other classes as well, like the humanities? 22:9-13.

These questions were addressed in the site visit transcript discussion 18:14-24:20.

12. How about for students who might have disabilities that might make it particularly difficult for them to access this type of programming? 23:13-16.

This will depend on the specific needs of individual students, as laid out in the IEPs. It is not possible to determine accommodations for student with special needs until we examine IEPs of the enrolled students as there is no prior year data. The charter school will specifically comply with all reporting requirements for eligible costs as set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in its guidance entitled "Act 16 Expenditures per Student Guidance." The "accommodations" will vary depending upon such issues as assistive technology needs. We would be unable to determine this until we examine files of enrolled students.

13. If the district had some students who have multiple disabilities, e.g., who are non-verbal or who can't access/use accessibility devices, what is the applicant's plan to integrate this program? 24:22-25:5, reworded.

As noted in its application, UDACS will comply with Pennsylvania Chapter 711 and provide eligible students with access to screen readers, text readers, dictation and word prediction software, large monitors, alternative keyboards and mice, and other AT as specified in the students' IEP, as explained at pages 66 of the application. Other accommodations will be made as necessary and appropriate. Again, the "accommodations" will vary depending upon such issues as assistive technology needs. We would be unable to determine this until we examine files of enrolled students.

14. Who are the staff members who will customize the curriculum to adapt to different student needs? Do you have any educators on board right now? 27:8-16, reworded.

We cannot hire curriculum specialists, special education teachers or a SPED director until the charter is approved. Once the application has been approved, the school can recruit and hire a special education director who can respond to all special education related queries. Until then, our special education legal team will assist in responding to special education questions.

15. What do you anticipate the cost per student to be of integrating students with disabilities/the most severe disabilities into the computer science program, considering supplies, technology, or other costs? 31:20-32:1, reworded.

Again, this will depend on the specific needs of individual students, as laid out in the IEPs. It is not possible to determine costs per student with special needs until we examine IEPs of the enrolled students as there is no prior year data. The charter school will specifically comply with all reporting requirements for eligible costs as set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in its guidance entitled "Act 16 Expenditures per Student Guidance."

16. What do you anticipate the percentage of students with disabilities to be? 32:24-33:1, reworded.

As stated during the site visit (transcript 33:3), this is projected at approximately 17 percent. We believe it is a reasonable projection based on the information we have about UDSD's population. The figure is based on the PDE Penn Data information for UDSD from the most recent year. This percentage mirrors the existing demographic profile of the UDSD itself. In the event the projections of enrollment and the associated budget for special education students were lower than actual enrollment and costs, UDACS would make the necessary adjustments to ensure compliance with all applicable special education laws and regulations.

17. What do you estimate the per-student cost to be for the specialized integrative technology that will enable disabled/the most severely disabled students to participate in the computer science curriculum, assuming 17% of your student population has a disability? 33:8-35:4, reworded.

Again, this would vary among individual students. The "accommodation" cost will vary depending upon such issues as assistive technology needs. We would be unable to determine until we examine files of enrolled students.

18. Who is the person responsible for disability accommodations? Is the attorney going to be handling the day-to-day of special education at the school? 51:6-52:22, reworded.

Once the charter is approved, we will make the necessary hires to ensure that all special education students can be properly served consistent with applicable laws. Those hires will include a SPED director. We cannot hire a SPED director until the charter is approved. Once the application has been approved, the school can recruit and hire a special education director who can respond to all special education related queries.

Until then, our special education legal team will assist in responding to special education questions.

19. The application identifies two methods of evaluating students for special education classification and eligibility. Where in the application are both methods described? Why is the charter school using both methods, and what steps if any were left outstanding that are necessary for implementation of either of those methods of evaluating students for special education classification and eligibility? 56:4-12.

The MTSS/RTI process that is proposed is evidence-based and is designed to identify and serve the needs of all students in a proactive, preferral process, which is addressed in the application at pages 57-63. In addition, the co-teaching model that is proposed will help to identify and serve needs within the least restrictive environment and will provide the professional development and guided practice essential to staff training.

20. Please describe the full continuum of special education placements at the itinerant through the full-time level, including the types of supports that will be available. 57:7-10.

As set forth in the application, the continuum will be based on the identified needs of the enrolled students as listed in their IEPs, as explained at page 67 of the application. The full details of the continuum of placements cannot be determined in advance. However, as required by law, the charter school will provide the full continuum of supports from itinerant through full-time and including the types of supports envisioned by IDEA based on what each student requires for FAPE. See 34 C.F.R. Section 115, 39. This will include outside placements if FAPE requires. See 22 Pa. Code Chapter 711.43. However, the intention of the charter school is to provide supports in-house to the greatest extent practicable.

21. When will special education students who require direct reading instruction on a daily basis receive that instruction? The application references three 60-minute sessions of reading and that other students will receive reading for 30 minutes. We're trying to determine when in the schedule students will be receiving these services. 59:1-17.

The daily schedule, including direct reading instruction and other student-specific services, will be determined based on the enrollment and the numbers, grade levels and specific accommodations required by the students enrolled. The applicant stands by the commitment to three 60-minute sessions for students who require this accommodation.

22. Is the computer science teacher an integration specialist? Do they work in a bigger role like that of a coach? Are they teaching classes or just being the specialist and providing coaching? 66:11-67:9, reworded.

The Computer Science Teacher and the Director, Computer Science, will joint serve as integration specialists.

23. Is the computer science teacher in the budget one and the same as the computer science specialist? Is the Director of computer science the same as the specialist? From a budgeting perspective, is the specialist more like a teacher or a director? Would the funding follow any additional duties assigned? 67:16-68:19, reworded.

There are two separate positions. One is for a computer science teacher and another is for the Director of Computer Science. The Director, Computer Science, will be a computer science specialist.

24. Is there/what is the job description for the computer science teacher and/or Director of Computer Science? 84:14-23.

Both job descriptions are attached.

25. Do you believe that the application has all of the up-to-date standards for all core subject areas, including EL science standards? 28:20-29:7. What are the computer science standards and where do they currently stand relative to the Pennsylvania science standards? Do you believe that the next generation science standards are in this application, and that the application is up to date with those standards? 71:3-72:10, reworded. Are you familiar with when the EL standards shifted in Pennsylvania? Your application has the 2015 standards listed. Is there a reason why you have the 2015 standards for EL? 72:19-73:8.

The application submitted is compliant with relevant standards. PA English Learner standards were included as referenced in the application under a hyperlink located in each curriculum under "Modifications for Diverse Learners." Hence the EL standards have been pulled out of the attachment and fully integrated into every core UDACS curriculum through the Atlas platform. (See next page: Atlas Login Credentials and Instructions.) As the District is no doubt aware, the recently adopted STEELS standards are not required to be implemented until the 2025-2026 school year.

At the time the curriculum was written there was unavailability of the December 2022 adopted STEELS standards in the Atlas standards library in light on the STEELS adoption date and time to interface the Standards into the Atlas Platform. Knowing the STEELS effective compliance date of 2025 implementation permitted time to adjust the curriculum and be inclusive of PA STEELS which also are infused with the Next Generation Science Standards. The standards listed in the November 2023 application are in compliance with PA SAS. Moreover, because the links cited below are "live," and thus continually updated, STEELS is now reflected in the UDACS Science curriculum.

Atlas Login Information

(Links to this information were contained in the application as it was submitted)

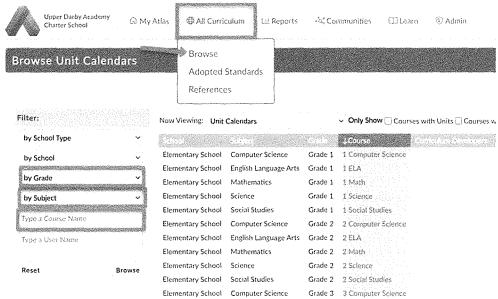
School Name: Upper Darby Charter School
Atlas URL: https://upperdarby.rubiconatlas.org

Username: curriculum@csmillc.com

Password: curriculum

You can access the school's curriculum virtually via the <u>Atlas</u> platform! Login to the UDCS site by clicking on the Atlas URL above with the provided username and password.

To access the curriculum, go to **All Curriculum>Browse**Utilize the filters on the left to view specific subjects/grades/courses:



Additionally, you can use these links to view the already filtered curriculum (just make sure you log in first, and then click on the subject-specific maps below for quick access):

ELA Curriculum

Math Curriculum

Science Curriculum

Social Studies Curriculum

Computer Science Curriculum

Contact our team if you have questions or experience issues in Atlas: 503-223-7600 prompt 2 or support@onatlas.com

26. What is the Applicant's plan to create professional opportunities for teachers, including professional development opportunities and opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the charter school? 61:17-21.

PD will be ongoing and tailored to the specific needs and goals of the UDACS teachers and the school community, and is addressed in the application on pages 135-139. PD for K-8 teachers will be designed to enhance their teaching skills, keep them updated on the

latest educational research and trends, and provide support in addressing the diverse needs of their students. there will be opportunities for feedback and reflection, and application in the classroom. Additionally, UDACS will provide new teachers opportunities for hands-on learning, mentorship, and collaboration with experienced educators. Here are some recommended areas for PD:

1. Differentiated Instruction:

- o Strategies for catering to diverse learning styles and abilities within the same classroom.
- Deep dive into data to target instruction, build intervention groups, and evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction.
- How to create individualized learning plans for students.

2. Technology Integration:

- o Incorporating educational technology tools into the curriculum.
- o Online teaching strategies and resources.

3. Classroom Management:

- Effective strategies for maintaining a positive and inclusive classroom environment.
- o Behavior management techniques and positive reinforcement strategies.

4. Assessment and Feedback:

- o Diverse assessment methods/tools
- o Providing constructive and timely feedback to students and parents.
- PSSA required PD
- o iReady what it is, how to use it and interpret benchmarks

5. PA Standards

- o Review standards for each content area
- Strategies for incorporating standards and anchors into lessons

6. Cultural Competence and Inclusion:

- o Strategies for creating a culturally responsive classroom.
- Inclusive teaching practices for students with diverse backgrounds and abilities.

7. Literacy and Numeracy Strategies:

- o Implementing the language arts and math curricula.
- o Best practices in teaching reading, writing, and mathematical skills.
- o Integrating literacy and numeracy across different subject areas.

8. Project-Based Learning:

- o Designing and implementing project-based learning experiences.
- o Collaboration and teamwork in the classroom.

9. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL):

- o Incorporating SEL skills into the curriculum.
- o Creating a supportive and emotionally safe learning environment.

10. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):

- o Collaborative learning and sharing best practices with colleagues.
- o Reflective practices to improve teaching.

11. SPED-ELL and Inclusive Practices:

o Strategies to support SPED and/or ELL students

- o Adapting materials and assessments for diverse learners.
- o Review responsibilities and requirements
- Additional professional development in areas related to SPED & ELL specialists

12. Parent and Community Engagement:

- o Building positive relationships with parents and caregivers.
- o Involving the community in the educational process.

13. **STEAM:**

- o Strategies for teaching computer science curriculum
- o Integrating science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics into the curriculum using hands-on and inquiry-based learning approaches.

14. Crisis and Trauma-Informed Teaching:

- o Recognizing and addressing the impact of trauma on students.
- o Strategies for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom.
- o Addressing parent concerns and building positive relationships.

15. Legal and Ethical Considerations:

- *Understanding legal obligations and ethical standards in education.*
- o Maintaining professionalism and confidentiality.
- Navigating ethical dilemmas.

16. Professional Growth and Reflection:

- o Setting professional goals and creating a plan for growth.
- o Reflective practices for continuous improvement.
- Staying current with educational research and trends.

17. Subject Specific PD

• Review curriculum for subject (standards, objectives, strategies & activities)

Position Title: Director of Computer Science

Reports To: Principal/CEO

Job Summary

To direct, advise and guide computer science activities of the school. Set goals and objectives for the Computer Science program to ensure the success of the program, track and report progress.

Essential Functions

- Plans, schedules and coordinates all computer science programs for the school
- Work directly with Computer Science and other teachers at the school
- Responsible for organizing a schoolwide computer science committee with representation from each grade and administration
- Meets regularly with the schoolwide computer science committee to discuss options and faculty preferences and subdivide responsibilities for the implementation of the program. Works with representatives to identify and plan programming for the school
- Maintains partnerships with computer science vendors and partnering organizations
- Coordinate professional development for the computer science program including observations and modeling.
- Oversees and updates funding and activity information
- Assures compliance with all grants pertaining to the Computer Science program
- Develops and maintains a handbook/flyers about the computer science program to be shared with teachers, administrators, and parents
- Distributes and collect end of year surveys
- Continues working on the expansion of curricular modification and differentiation strategies through curriculum compacting and replacement activities
- Performs other related duties as assigned

Minimum Requirements

- Master's Degree in Education Administration or related field from an accredited college or university
- Experience as a Director of Computer Sciences
- Minimum 3-5 years of teaching experience as a Computer Science Teacher
- Pennsylvania Criminal Record Check Clearance
- Pennsylvania Child Abuse Clearance
- FBI Criminal Background Clearance
- Good moral character

Certifications/Licenses

 Valid Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Instructional Certificate in Elementary K-6 and Science 7-8 certificates, as applicable. Completion of Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Education recommended trainings for Computer Science teaching highly desirable.

Demonstrated Knowledge Expectations

- Federal and State laws and regulations
- Pennsylvania Charter School Law
- Pennsylvania Leadership Standards
- The principles, practices and methods of grade level computer science education
- The contents, materials, methodologies and practices utilized within computer science education at the respective grade level
- Critical thinking methodologies and problem-solving techniques as applicable to computer science education.
- Proficiency in automated student information systems for progress and grade reporting and class work documentation and ability to integrate technology into instructional delivery
- Mastery of necessary content and knowledge and skills to successfully teach assigned content area(s) and grade level(s) and deliver exceptional standard based instruction in assigned content areas and grade level(s) that ensures academic growth for all students, including those with special needs
- Response to Interventions (RtII)
- Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)

Demonstrated Abilities

- Develop high-end learning and strengths and talents of all students
- Provide enriched learning experiences and higher learning standards for all children through three goals; developing talents in all children, providing a broad range of advanced-level computer science experiences for all students, and providing advanced follow-up opportunities for young people based on their strengths and interests
- Serve high-ability students in a variety of educational settings and in schools serving diverse ethnic and socioeconomic populations
- Review student data in order to match personalized resources from selected computer science resources

Position Title: Teacher – Computer Sciences

Reports To: Principal/CEO

Job Summary

The Computer Science Teacher will be responsible for developing in each student an interest in and the ability to apply computer science as a tool for learning and expressing ideas in a variety of disciplines, interests and situations and successfuly navigating in a digital world.

The Computer Science Teacher will (i) provide the use of real-life applications and simulations to instruct students in the analysis and interpretation of material being presented, (ii) instructs the use of tools, materials, processes and applications of technology, including pertinent software applications, in the development of lessons and (iii) use formal and informal classroom and school assessments.

Essential Functions

- Assesses the skill level of students and aligns classroom goals and activities to established state and local standards
- Provides instruction in accordance with area of certification
- Teaches knowledge and skills in computer science, computer coding, analyzing and solving problems with solutions automated using a computer device.
- Demonstrates knowledge of computer coding, programming, physical computing, HTML/CSS and Digital Citizenship
- Provides students with instruction emphasizing real life applications and simulations
- Teaches inquiry techniques that encourage experimentation and alternative approaches to problem solving
- Provides technical expertise in the use of tools, materials, processes and applications of technology, including pertinent software applications
- Provides students with learning experiences requiring them to demonstrate comprehension of concepts and the ability to use technological resources in developing solutions to problems
- Provides instruction that encourages students to use learned skills as tools for inquirybased learning
- Creates a classroom environment in which students have access to subject-related materials that address their needs and interests
- Collaborates with staff members within and across disciplines to integrate subject-specific skills across the curriculum
- Complies with policies, regulations and procedures of Upper Darby Academy Charter School; communicates effectively with parents and works collaboratively with staff
- Displays high-level professional conduct and image at all times; establishes and maintains an acceptable attendance record; and participates in extra-curricular activities and/or leadership roles outside the classroom

- Keeps abreast of the latest developments and improvements in education as it affects the instructional program; attends faculty meetings to discuss school problems and teaching methods
- Maintains classroom discipline
- Maintains attendance, grade and other required records
- Performs other related duties as assigned

Minimum Requirements

- Bachelor's Degree in Education from an accredited college or university
- Pennsylvania Criminal Record Check Clearance
- Pennsylvania Child Abuse Clearance
- FBI Criminal Background Clearance
- Good moral character

Certificates/Licenses

• Valid Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Instructional Certificate in Elementary K-6 and Science 7-8 certificates, as applicable. Completion of Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Education recommended trainings for Computer Science teaching highly desirable.

Demonstrated Knowledge Expectations

- The principles, practices and methods of grade level computer science education
- The contents, materials, methodologies and practices utilized within computer science education at the respective grade level
- Critical thinking methodologies and problem-solving techniques as applicable to computer science education.
- Proficiency in automated student information systems for progress and grade reporting and class work documentation and ability to integrate technology into instructional delivery
- Mastery of necessary content and knowledge and skills to successfully teach assigned content area(s) and grade level(s) and deliver exceptional standard based instruction in assigned content areas and grade level(s) that ensures academic growth for all students, including those with special needs
- Pennsylvania Core Standards
- Response to Interventions (RtII)
- Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)

Demonstrated Abilities

- Assess students' needs and learning styles and to design appropriate differentiated instruction to meet their needs
- Use and apply simulations and technological innovations in the classroom in pursuit of instructional strategies
- Use planned computer science lesson in a manner that allows students to use their computer science experience as a way to enhance language and math skills.
- Facilitate inquiry-based learning as well as whole class, small group and individual instruction, driven by student needs
- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with faculty, administrators, supportive staff, parents and students
- Deliver exceptional standards-based instruction in assigned content areas and/or grade level(s) that ensure academic growth for all students, including those with special needs
- Use student information systems for progress and grade reporting and class work documentation
- Integrate technology into the instructional delivery