

**JOHN DE LA HOWE SCHOOL  
PRESENTATION TO THE STATE AGENCY RESTRUCTURING STUDY COMMITTEE'S  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION (K-16), CULTURAL, REGULATORY, & TRANSPORTATION  
OCTOBER 27, 2010**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be with you today as you and your staff work so diligently to carry out the charge of your committee to examine opportunities to further streamline government; with the goals of realizing maximum effectiveness and efficiency as well as transparency and accountability. I confess I struggled with what I might share with the committee this morning because with just four months under my belt as head of the John De La Howe School, I was concerned that I might be more inclined to rely on the anecdotal rather than the factual. I will say, for the record, particularly after my conversations yesterday with Paul Patrick and Emily Heatwole, that I do look at the opportunity to be here today with you and several of my peers as exactly that; an opportunity to begin meaningful dialogue about how we transform government not only out of consideration of the current economic environment but also out of recognition that we must have a government that is structured in a way that is aspirational, nibble, and adaptive. I have every confidence that as the heavy lifting is completed, we will enjoy such a structure.

My comments will be relatively brief, as it my understanding that the committee would prefer a more interactive exchange as opposed to a more formal presentation. So, having said that, I will not belabor you with the 200 year history of service of the John De La Howe School to the children and families of our State or the realities of the unprecedented budget reductions we have endured the past several years. These issues I believe are well know and understood by the committee. Indeed, each of you is familiar with the mission of the John De La Howe School and intimately familiar with the difficult budget decisions that have had to be made and remain to be made.

I was asked to appear here today to present and discuss the possible savings of consolidating the John De La Howe School with the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School and the possibility of both agencies consolidating under the Department of Juvenile Justice. To be candid, I am not prepared to make such a presentation. Not because it is such a difficult idea to consider or because I'm in "turf protection" mode but because my agency has just not explored these options in any methodical or orchestrated manner and it would be improper of me, particularly given my tenure, to attempt to relate the will of my Board and our many stakeholders without having had the discussion with these groups.

I can tell you that our plans as an agency with the very special mission of caring for children who are, in many cases, one step away from entering our juvenile justice system, or becoming lifelong substance abusers, teenage parents or becoming homeless, or victims of sexual assault include:

1. Being focused on the mission, vision and values of the agency in such a way that we increase our availability of direct care to these children and families
2. Forging partnerships and other collaborative arrangements that help reduce agency costs and leverage resources while concurrently broadening services

3. Realigning the agency around key cultural principals that we believe will drive the agency toward greater efficiency and effectiveness by being team-based, client focused, and goal directed
4. Remaining focused on process and continuous improvement endeavors that result in improved efficiency and effectiveness
5. Developing and deploying service sharing opportunities; again focused on cost effectiveness and efficiency
6. Enhancing processes to evaluate, change and track cost effective and efficient management of our agency resources; all while working to
7. Diversify our agency funding stream through targeted grant opportunities and similar support.

Am I convinced that we can carry out our mission in a more cost effective manner – absolutely! Can we achieve cost effectiveness without negatively impacting quality service delivery – I honestly don't know. What I do know is that when it comes to the education, safety and security of our children, we simply can't cut corners. The John De La Howe School will continue to identify cost savings opportunities and take action to achieve those savings; we will not do this at the expense of failing the students and families who need our services and benefit from what, in many cases, is the last opportunity to make a meaningful difference for the child and the family. The simple notion of whether we bare this burden now or into the not too distant future; when it will cost much more through incarceration at the Department of Juvenile Justice as a youthful offender or as an adult inmate at the Department of Corrections is the question. By then, the impact of failing to provide our services will have spread beyond the immediate family and will have spread to victims and the family of victims.

At the John De La Howe School, we take a holistic approach to combating the ravaging effects of choices being made by children who lack the capacity; either because of the absence of parental supervision and family structure, alcohol and drug abuse, low self-esteem, sexual activity or abuse, poor communications or numerous other behavioral issues that, while extreme, do not make our students and their families candidates for help through the Department of Social Services, the Department of Juvenile Justice, or the Department of Mental Health. In many respects, the John De La Howe School is a one-stop provider agency for a hybrid delivery of such services; coupled with a strong focus on education. I am convinced that this hybrid of services; behavior modification, intense family counseling, and a unique educational environment are the discerning points between the John De La Howe School, Wil Lou Gray and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

We enjoy some obvious advantages: we are based in a rural setting; our students reside on campus in cottages where we instill family values, model acceptable behaviors; emphasize the importance of service, create opportunities to develop work ethic, improve self-esteem, communications, decision-making and focus on education and preparing the student to be a productive citizen.

Just as the Legislature is rethinking the logic of incarcerating some non-violent offenders at the Department of Corrections, there may be similar logic in looking at the incarceration of many non-violent youthful offenders within the Department of Juvenile Justice and consider how the John De La

Howe School might be a more suitable option. We have the model and the infrastructure to accommodate these types of youth and may perhaps be in a position to better serve their families.

With regard to the Wil Lou Gray School, I would simply say that I believe our missions and models are vastly different and distinct. In example,

- we are accredited to serve students as young as 12 years of age and as old as 21;
- we focus and prepare our students on re-entry into their local school for completion of their high school diploma and provide scholarship funds for former students who pursue higher education opportunities
- We deliver clinical therapy through trained master's level staff to address behavior modification and emotional issues such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, depression and a whole host of disorders that do not require psychiatric hospitalization but, if left unaddressed, could manifest into more serious conditions.
- We focus on family involvement and therapy
- We offer an Experiential Learning Program that addresses the needs of children who simply show no propensity for learning exclusively in the traditional school setting but respond well to service learning

Despite our different and distinct missions, I do believe there are possible opportunities for collaborating across agency lines to achieve cost savings and efficiencies with not only Wil Lou Gray and the Department of Juvenile Justice but also with the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Education's district-based Alternative School programs. In fact, we embarked on a partnership this school year with Abbeville School District to take their Alternative School students as day students at our on-campus school. The McCormick School District has expressed a similar interest and we will be approaching Edgefield School District to gauge their interest.

As I close, I would simply note that our agency, even in the face of the challenges associated with an over forty percent (40%) reduction in our budget and the attendant loss of positions, has not diminished the positive impact we are having on the lives of the children and families we serve. We understand the significant challenges you face in making the very tough decisions that are before you and appreciate very much your inviting us to the table to be part of the discussion.

Mr. Chairman, I would welcome any questions the committee may have.