



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904

302.674.0684

Academy of Dover
Major Modification Request
Submitted 12/30/2019

CHARTER SCHOOL MODIFICATION APPLICATION QUESTIONS

There are core questions that must be answered by the applicant, regardless of whether the modification is considered a minor or major modification. Additional questions are determined by the specific nature of the request, for example expansion or reduction by more than 15%, change of name, change of location, etc. Please provide clear, complete, and accurate information in response to each question.

Please indicate the type(s) of modification(s) you are requesting by checking all applicable boxes below:

Table 2

Minor Modification (Section A Only)		Major Modification (Section A <u>AND</u> additional questions identified below)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enrollment change (increase or decrease) between 5 and 15%	<input type="checkbox"/>	Performance Agreement Section A only
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change agreement with EMO/CMO	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enrollment change (increase or decrease) of greater than 15% Section B
<input type="checkbox"/>	Start date (one-time) delay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Grade configuration (adding grade levels or reducing grade levels) Section C
<input type="checkbox"/>	Name of charter school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Educational Program (i.e. curriculum) Section D
<input type="checkbox"/>	Existing or planned school facilities or structures (including any plan to use temporary or modular structures)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mission (includes At-Risk designation) Section E
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change in terms to current site facility arrangement (i.e. lease to purchase)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace, remove, or add EMO/CMO, or transfer of authorizer Section F
<input type="checkbox"/>	Educator Evaluation Process	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enrollment preferences Section G
<input type="checkbox"/>	A change to the current authorized number of hours, either daily or annually, devoted to actual school sessions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Location change Section H
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Goals for student performance Section I



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Section A Core Questions:

1. **What modification does the school's Board of Directors want to make to the term(s) of the charter?** Identify the page number(s) on which the term(s) is/are stated in the currently approved charter. If the term(s) of the charter the school wants to modify is/are conditions placed on the charter by the Secretary of Education and members of the State Board of Education, state the condition(s) and the date(s) on which the condition(s) was/were placed on the school's charter.

At this time, Academy of Dover wishes to modify the current charter to increase the grade span from k-5 to k-6, and to increase enrollment to 330 students. The current charter is approved for k-5 with enrollment of 300 students, which can be found on the currently approved charter, on pages 4 and 16.

The Academy of Dover Charter School at 104 Saulsbury Road, Dover opened in September 2003 growing to serve students in kindergarten through sixth grade by the 2006-2007 school year. During the 2007-2008 school year, the school reduced its grade configuration to kindergarten through fourth grade with the total approved enrollment of 325 students with the plan to increase to 393 students by school year 2011-12. In 2010, the school's Board of Directors submitted an application to modify the school's charter seeking approval to decrease the approved enrollment from 384 students to 300 students in k-4 through 2013-2014. A few years later, the charter was amended to become a kindergarten through fifth grade school.

2. **What is the effective date of the proposed modification?**

The effective date of the proposed modification is the 2020/2021 school year.

3. **The authorizer will review your most recent Performance Review Reports as part of your application.** Discuss the school's academic performance, compliance with the terms of its charter, and financial viability as measured by the Performance Framework.

Academic Performance

Based on the new Delaware Report Card, the Academy has received an overall rating of Approaching Expectations for the 2018-2019 school year. (See Appendix A).

Overall: Approaching Expectations

Academic Achievement: Approaching Expectations

ELA Proficiency: 49.6%

Math Proficiency: 39.2%

On-track Attendance: 90.35%

There is no question that education is a powerful driver of prosperity. Research shows that Americans with college degrees earn 117 percent more per year than those who do not complete high school. Moreover, to enrich and support our local and state community, citizens with higher levels of education are more likely to vote, to volunteer, and to donate to charity.

The Academy of Dover Charter School seeks to provide the elements of high-quality academic instruction for all students. The purpose of the charter school is to advance the Academy's vision for excellence and diversity which meets the needs of our community. These elements include 100% credentialed teachers, standards-based accountability for our school, teacher evaluations based partly on student learning, culturally aware staff, and a trauma informed school. In addition, the Academy, maintains small class sizes, provides instructional support paraprofessionals in K-3, and instructional specialists for reading and math. These ideals have directly supported the Academy showing academic progress which exceeds our local school district's overall performance.

It is also important to our current administration and staff to understand and learn from the lessons of past efforts; therefore, we wish to improve and enrich the overall experience of our students and their families by taking a holistic approach to education. The Academy provides free breakfast and lunch to all students, implements PBIS, and has an in-house Family Crisis Therapist. Moreover, on-staff we have a social worker, behavior specialist, and before and after care through the Boys and Girls Club to provide for student and family needs. The expansion of public school choice options at the 6th grade level will continue to provide the opportunity for parents to choose the Academy.

The Academy strongly holds and is in keeping with federal and state level policymakers and advocates who push for major changes to the educational system based on these ideas.

Financial Viability

While we are very aware and acknowledge that the most recent audit, completed June 30, 2019, shows some concerning results in the Financial Performance Framework, we also know that our course corrections over the past few months and the charter modification will be significant in our future financial viability. One factor that has had a longstanding and major effect on a number of the financial frameworks for the Academy is the Mosaica Settlement. This debt has now been paid in full from the local reserves, which will have a significant impact on the local funds.

The Current assets to liabilities ratio result is .79, which is far below the standard. Part of this is due to the Academy being housed in a rented facility. With this charter modification, the current facility, although remaining rented, will be adequate in size to

meet the increased grade span request, thus not changing the liabilities proportion of the Academy.

The Unrestricted Days Cash as of the June 30, 2019 audit meets the standard, and will only be positively impacted by the charter modification.

The Enrollment Variance result as of June 30, 2019 is 90% and approaching the standard. Since June 30, 2019, a myriad of enrollment and recruitment methods have been employed that have achieved an increase in enrollment and an upward trend. Examples of these methods have included the following: Accepting students after the September 30th count, on-line campaign through Facebook advertising, flyers, updated web page, open house, electronic marquee in front of school, and word-of-mouth. Additionally, in a recent telephone survey of the 4th and 5th grade parents, all but 5 of those called responded that they were in favor of having their child(ren) remain in the Academy through the 6th grade- should the modification be approved.

Total Margin and Debt to Asset Ratio were both found to meet the standard.

The cash flow for the three-year period has been negative, resulting in a metric rating of far below standard. Since the audit report, there have been concerted efforts with the budget to fix this concern and meet this standard. The July 31, 2019 board approved budget shows a reserve amount of \$67,320.01, while the October 31, 2019 board approved budget now has increased the contingency reserve to \$258,056.18 with an additional \$33,883.16 in additional unallocated funds. While this is not where it needs to be, it is significantly higher than it was in a short amount of time, and trending in the right direction; this remains a focus of the Academy. The charter modification agreement will significantly impact this and will further enable the Academy to meet the standard of having a positive cash flow each year.

4. **Describe the rationale for the request(s).** Discuss any relevant research base or evidence that supports this type of request. *(Attachments may be provided)*

The Academy of Dover approved charter is for a grade configuration of kindergarten through 5th Grade. The Academy wishes to expand vertically by adding Grade 6 in order to support and provide students a more natural transition to the middle grades.

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of our currently polled 4th and 5th grade parents have responded with positive feedback to having their child remain in attendance through the 6th grade. In addition, parents of students in lower grades have also expressed interest in their children attending the Academy through 6th grade. Some of our current families have shared that they are interested in enrolling their other children at the Academy as well.

(See Appendix B)

The current configuration of the Academy is contrary to the surrounding schools. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of our current student population is from the Capital School District, resulting in our students having to go to a new school for just 6th grade. By having an option of 6th grade within our Academy, our students will have a more natural transition into secondary school.

5. Describe how the proposed modification will impact the operation of the school. Include how student achievement, staffing, facilities, and financial viability of the school may be impacted in the current school year and for the remainder of the school's charter term.

This modification will have a positive impact on student achievement because students will have greater consistency during their k-6 experience. Some studies, and feedback from parents, share that placing *sixth* graders in middle school will expose students to older teens which may have a negative influence on them, which can include higher disciplinary rates and lower test scores than their sixth grade peers who remained in elementary school. Researchers at Duke and University of California, Berkeley show children in the sixth grade are at a point in their lives when they are easily influenced by their peers. Keeping the sixth graders in elementary school gives them another year to mature before they are exposed to older adolescents. Many parents and teachers believe that our Academy sixth graders will do better to remain in a smaller, more nurturing setting where there are fewer classmates and more one-on-one contact with their teacher/s. Therefore, this additional year will provide students the time needed to be both academically and emotionally ready for the middle school transition.

(See Appendix C)

This modification will also have a positive impact on staffing and facilities because it will allow us to maximize our current resources, both in terms of staffing and space. Through our modification, we will be fully using the entire space that we are leasing, thus getting the full economic impact. Therefore, this expansion will have a positive impact on our financial viability due to the benefits of serving additional students in our current facility, while only having to adjust our staffing slightly to meet the instructional needs of our additional students. Our current staffing of school operations, curriculum specialists, special education, school nutrition, related arts, and transportation supports will remain the same while being able to support kindergarten through sixth grade students in our Academy.

6. Indicate the projected impact, if any, of the proposed modification on the school's present financial position, and its financial position going forward. If the modification promises to create financial challenges, indicate how those will be remedied.

While we are very aware and acknowledge that the most recent audit, completed June 30, 2019, shows some concerning results in the Financial Performance Framework, we also know that our course corrections over the past few months and the charter modification will be significant in our future financial viability. One factor that has had a longstanding and major effect on a number of the financial frameworks for the Academy is the Mosaica Settlement. This debt has been paid in full as of the beginning of this Fiscal Year, from the local reserves, and will also have a significant impact on the local funds.

Since the audit report, there have been concerted efforts with the budget to fix this concern and meet this standard. The July 31, 2019 board approved budget shows a reserve amount of \$67,320.01, while the October 31, 2019 board approved budget now has increased the contingency reserve to \$258,056.18 with an additional \$33,883.16 in additional unallocated funds. While this is not where it needs to be, it is significantly higher than it was in a short amount of time and trending in the right direction. This remains a focus of the Academy. The charter modification agreement will significantly impact this and will further enable the Academy to meet the standard of having a positive cash flow each year, and positively affect our future financial position.

Projected Enrollment

a. Provide a five-year enrollment chart by grade level, in the prescribed format below. Ensure that the chart allows for the natural progression of students from year-to-year.

Note: This will become the school's authorized enrollment if the modification application is approved.

Projected Enrollment						
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
K	45	44	44	44	44	44
Grade 1	47	46	44	44	44	44
Grade 2	56	48	46	44	44	44
Grade 3	30	55	48	46	44	44
Grade 4	43	37	55	50	49	51
Grade 5	45	50	43	55	50	52

Grade 6		50	50	47	55	51
Total	266	330	330	330	330	330

Section C Questions:

1. Describe the nature and extent of the proposed changes to the school's current grade configuration. Indicate whether you seek to add or cease offering a grade or grades, substantially increase or decrease current enrollment practices and/or projections for future enrollment, etc. *(Please make sure to indicate whether you seek an increase or reduction of enrollment of between 5 and 15% or more than 15% of the currently approved total enrollment and note that modification requests that fall into those ranges must be received by the Department of Education's Charter School Office between November 1 and December 31.)*

Academy of Dover is seeking to modify its current grade configuration. The Academy currently serves students in kindergarten through 5th grade and the Academy is proposing to serve students in kindergarten through 6th grade beginning with the 2020-2021 school year. The addition of 6th grade will increase the overall enrollment by 30 students, which is a 10% increase in enrollment.

2. Provide an overview of the planned curriculum, including one scope and sequence per subject area per grade band (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) for each grade level that will be affected by this modification. The scope and sequence documents should identify course outcomes and demonstrate clear alignment with the Delaware Content Standards (including Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, and Next Generation Science Standards) in all content areas. Summarize curricular choices, by subject, and the rationale for each choice, including research and other evidence of effectiveness. If the modification includes a commitment to join the Social Studies and/or Science Coalition, then a signed MOU would replace the scope and sequence requirement for Social Studies and/or Science.

The curriculum planned for our sixth grade will align directly with our other curriculum offerings. We have begun using the EL Education Curriculum for our ELA curriculum in K-5 and will add on a 6th grade component. By using EL Education, Social Studies is already fully integrated thematically within the literature. We are currently using Go Math for our K-5 students but have plans to move to something more rigorous in the near future. For our 6th grade addition, we would use the more rigorous curriculum from the start. The Engage New York curriculum will be our foundation curriculum.

In addition to the core curriculum for ELA and Math, we also use the STAR Assessment for both ELA and Math. This allows us to screen students at the beginning of the school year to establish student benchmarks in ELA and Math, as well as to continually progress monitor throughout the school year. Through the STAR Assessment, we are able to closely monitor student progress and make data driven instructional decisions for our students. We will utilize the STAR Assessment in both ELA and Math for our 6th grade students.

The Academy participates in the Science Coalition and will continue to align with the Department of Education program for this content area.

See Appendix D

3. Provide one Mathematics unit of instruction with corresponding summative assessments and scoring rubrics, and one ELA unit with corresponding summative assessment and scoring rubrics to demonstrate alignment of instruction to the Delaware Content Standards (Common Core State Standards in ELA and Mathematics). If the school does not intend to join the Delaware Science or Social Studies Coalitions, then 1 Science unit and 1 Social Studies unit with corresponding summative assessments and scoring rubrics to demonstrate alignment of instruction to the Next Generation Science Standards and Delaware Social Studies Content Standards are also required.

EL Education Curriculum will be the ELA curriculum utilized for sixth grade. By using EL Education, Social Studies topics are already fully integrated thematically within the literature. Engage New York will be the Grade 6 Math curriculum. The Academy participates in the Science and Social Studies Coalitions and will continue to align with the Department of Education's program for these content areas. Academy of Dover accesses the DOE Social Studies Recommended Curriculum through Schoology and will provide daily a 45-minute learning block [alternately], for Science and Social Studies. Teacher training is also provided through Schoology, and from one of our instructional specialists, who attends Science Coalition meetings.

See Appendix E



ACADEMY OF DOVER

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Appendix A – Delaware Report Card



Academy Of Dover Charter School

The report card snapshot (available at the state, district, charter and school levels) shares high-level educational information, prioritized by parents, caregivers and families. Click more info to learn more about an education area or navigate through the top menu to see educational data with additional details.

Enrollment



266

266 students were enrolled in school as of September 30.

Enrollment includes all students in preschool through 12th grade in traditional school districts, charter schools and vocational-technical schools.

Race/Ethnicity

American Indian or Alaska Native	0.00%
Asian American	0.00%
Black or African American	77.82%
Hispanic or Latino	11.86%
Multi-Racial	3.01%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1.13%
White or Caucasian	6.39%

Residence

Foster Care	*
Homeless	*
Migrant	*
Military Family	*

Other Characteristics

English Learners	10.15%
Low Income	51.5%
Students with Disabilities	10.15%

English Language Arts



49.6%

49.6% of students were proficient in English language arts (ELA) last school year.

Students in grades 3-8 are annually assessed in ELA using the Smarter assessment and in 11th grade by the SAT assessment. More than 95% of students take the SAT, regardless of college or career path after graduation.

English Language Arts	49.6%
Smarter	49.8%

Attendance



90.35%

90.35% of students had on-track attendance last school year.

On-track attendance shows the percent of students who missed less than 10% of school days.

On-track Attendance	90.35%
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Academy Of Dover Charter School

The report card snapshot (available at the state, district, charter and school levels) shares high-level educational information, prioritized by parents, caregivers and families. Click more info to learn more about an education area or navigate through the top menu to see educational data with additional details.

Mathematics



39.2%

39.2% of students were proficient in math last school year.

Students in grades 3-8 are annually assessed in and mathematics using the Smarter assessment and in 11th grade by the SAT assessment. More than 95% of students take the SAT, regardless of college or career path after graduation.

Mathematics	39.2%
Smarter	39.2%



ACADEMY OF DOVER

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Appendix B – Letters of Support

CHARLES S. POSTLES, Jr.
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
33rd District



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE OF DELAWARE
411 LEGISLATIVE AVENUE
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901**

COMMITTEES
Agriculture
Education
Energy
Health & Human Development
Natural Resources
Veterans Affairs

December 20, 2019

Dr. Susan Bunting
Secretary of Education
Delaware Department of Education
John G. Townsend Building
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE, 19901

Dear Dr. Bunting,

Being a Legislator, I recognize the importance of our Delaware students receiving high quality education. My time as a member of the Milford School Board provided me with first-hand knowledge of what it takes to ensure students are receiving the best education possible. I believe the Academy of Dover Charter School staff possess the qualities necessary to provide their students with exactly that, which is why I am writing this letter of support.

During my recent tour of The Academy, I could feel the energy and excitement throughout the building. It was very evident that the dedication of the staff and administration is unparalleled.

The Academy of Dover believes in educating the whole child; social emotional growth is just as important as academic achievement. The Academy provides a trauma-informed approach to working with students. By taking this approach with students, they ensure their students are making academic gains, while also developing into contributing members of society.

I fully support The Academy's desire to expand to 6th grade. Not only does it align with the current configuration of the Capital School District, the local school district many of their students reside within, it also allows their students to continue to grow both academically and socially while attending The Academy. The small class sizes and smaller setting offered at The Academy permits the necessary supports for its students and their families.

I encourage educational options for all residents. I continue to strive towards providing our students with quality education, which I believe is exactly what The Academy is doing for its students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles S. Postles, Jr.".

Charles S. Postles, Jr.
State Representative, 33rd District

12-12-19

To whom it may concern:

I am a grandmother caring for
three small children all under "12".
I also transport them to three different schools.

It cost a lot in gas & time.
But what is most important to me is they
all attend the same school to set examples
for each one. I believe that everyone
should try and love & learn from
one another. My motto is "Each one Teach One"

I also would love to have
teachers that have experience with ADHD etc.

To take time and create and motivate
their minds to levels that have no limits.

Love and teach them even when
they fight the good things that you have in
store for them. Never give up on them.

Thanks for listening ♥

Pb. Please allow

this school to go up to the 6th grade. Its very
IMPORTANT to a lot of people.

So I'm asking if the school
could Please go up to 6th grade.
We really need it. The children
need it. Have a home base for
the children to feel safe and loved.
Also to teach them all
that we can and all that we know.

I really need for my
grandchildren to have a home base.
The Awesome lady
name "Mrs. / Dr. Marinucci is a God
send, Her motive is all about family,
love, Teaching Positive Things, Second
Chances. To show the mother's and
Father's she's there 100%.

I'm happy I enrolled
the first child to the hands of such
Amazing people. I have 2 more.

GO 6th Grade
Yeah, Yeah!



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904

302.674.0684

Parent/Guardian Letter RE: Charter Modification

Date: 12/11/19

Parent/Guardian Name: Waneka Armstrong

Student Name: [REDACTED]

Current Grade: 5

WA

As the parent/guardian of an Academy of Dover Charter School Student, I am in support of the charter modification request to expand the student enrollment and change the grade configuration to include sixth grade for the 2020/2021 school year.

WA

If the sixth grade is approved to be offered at the Academy of Dover Charter School, I intend to have my child/children attend the Academy through the sixth grade.

Desired Activities (Check all that apply)

- ☒ Academic Afterschool Tutoring
- ☐ Odyssey of the Mind/Academic Challenge
- ☐ Reading Club
- ☒ Student Government
- ☐ Yearbook
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Cheerleading
- ☒ Basketball
- ☒ Soccer
- ☒ Cross Country/Running Club/Girls on the Run
- ☐ 4-H
- ☐ Theater
- ☐ Technology Club
- ☒ STEM Club
- ☐ Art Club
- ☐ Other: _____

Sincerely,

Waneka Armstrong
Parent/Guardian



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904

302.674.0684

Parent/Guardian Letter RE: Charter Modification

Date: 12/11/19

Parent/Guardian Name: Tracey D. Armstrong

Student Name: [REDACTED]

Current Grade: 5

TA

As the parent/guardian of an Academy of Dover Charter School Student, I am in support of the charter modification request to expand the student enrollment and change the grade configuration to include sixth grade for the 2020/2021 school year.

TA

If the sixth grade is approved to be offered at the Academy of Dover Charter School, I intend to have my child/children attend the Academy through the sixth grade.

Desired Activities (Check all that apply)

- ☒ Academic Afterschool Tutoring
- ☐ Odyssey of the Mind/Academic Challenge
- ☐ Reading Club
- ☐ Student Government
- ☐ Yearbook
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Dance
- ☒ Cheerleading
- ☒ Basketball
- ☒ Soccer
- ☒ Cross Country/Running Club/Girls on the Run
- ☐ 4-H
- ☐ Theater
- ☒ Technology Club
- ☒ STEM Club
- ☐ Art Club
- ☐ Other: _____

Sincerely,

Tracey D. Armstrong
Parent/Guardian



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904

302.674.0684

Parent/Guardian Letter RE: Charter Modification

Date: 12 | 11 | 19

Parent/Guardian Name: Prince Walker

Student Name: [REDACTED]

Current Grade: 4th & 1st

P.W.

As the parent/guardian of an Academy of Dover Charter School Student, I am in support of the charter modification request to expand the student enrollment and change the grade configuration to include sixth grade for the 2020/2021 school year.

P.W.

If the sixth grade is approved to be offered at the Academy of Dover Charter School, I intend to have my child/children attend the Academy through the sixth grade.

Desired Activities (Check all that apply)

- ☒ Academic Afterschool Tutoring
- ☒ Odyssey of the Mind/Academic Challenge
- ☒ Reading Club
- ☐ Student Government
- ☒ Yearbook
- ☒ Music
- ☒ Dance
- ☒ Cheerleading
- ☒ Basketball
- ☒ Soccer
- ☐ Cross Country/Running Club/Girls on the Run
- ☐ 4-H
- ☒ Theater
- ☐ Technology Club
- ☐ STEM Club
- ☐ Art Club
- ☐ Other: _____

Sincerely,

Prince Walker
Parent/Guardian



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904

302.674.0684

Parent/Guardian Letter RE: Charter Modification

Date: 12/01/19

Parent/Guardian Name: Lakisha Thomas

Student Name



Current Grade: 5th

SA.

As the parent/guardian of an Academy of Dover Charter School Student, I am in support of the charter modification request to expand the student enrollment and change the grade configuration to include sixth grade for the 2020/2021 school year.

SA.

If the sixth grade is approved to be offered at the Academy of Dover Charter School, I intend to have my child/children attend the Academy through the sixth grade.

Desired Activities (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Academic Afterschool Tutoring
- ☐ Odyssey of the Mind/Academic Challenge
- ☒ Reading Club
- ☒ Student Government
- ☒ Yearbook
- ☒ Music
- ☒ Dance
- ☒ Cheerleading
- ☒ Basketball
- ☐ Soccer
- ☒ Cross Country/Running Club/Girls on the Run
- ☐ 4-H
- ☐ Theater
- ☐ Technology Club
- ☒ STEM Club
- ☐ Art Club
- ☐ Other: _____

Sincerely,

Lakisha Thomas

Parent/Guardian



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904

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Parent/Guardian Letter RE: Charter Modification

Date: 12/11/2019

Parent/Guardian Name: Jennifer Fowler

Student Name: [REDACTED]

Current Grade: 5

As the parent/guardian of an Academy of Dover Charter School Student, I am in support of the charter modification request to expand the student enrollment and change the grade configuration to include sixth grade for the 2020/2021 school year.

If the sixth grade is approved to be offered at the Academy of Dover Charter School, I intend to have my child/children attend the Academy through the sixth grade.

Desired Activities (Check all that apply)

- ☒ Academic Afterschool Tutoring
- ☒ Odyssey of the Mind/Academic Challenge
- ☐ Reading Club
- ☐ Student Government
- ☒ Yearbook
- ☒ Music
- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Cheerleading
- ☒ Basketball
- ☒ Soccer
- ☐ Cross Country/Running Club/Girls on the Run
- ☐ 4-H
- ☐ Theater
- ☒ Technology Club
- ☐ STEM Club
- ☒ Art Club
- ☐ Other: _____

Sincerely, _____

Jennifer Fowler
Parent/Guardian



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904

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Parent/Guardian Letter RE: Charter Modification

Date: 12/11/19

Parent/Guardian Name: Lucas C. Fowler

Student Name: [REDACTED]

Current Grade: 5

LCF

As the parent/guardian of an Academy of Dover Charter School Student, I am in support of the charter modification request to expand the student enrollment and change the grade configuration to include sixth grade for the 2020/2021 school year.

LCF

If the sixth grade is approved to be offered at the Academy of Dover Charter School, I intend to have my child/children attend the Academy through the sixth grade.

Desired Activities (Check all that apply)

- ☒ Academic Afterschool Tutoring
- ☒ Odyssey of the Mind/Academic Challenge
- ☒ Reading Club
- ☐ Student Government
- ☐ Yearbook
- ☒ Music
- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Cheerleading
- ☒ Basketball
- ☐ Soccer
- ☐ Cross Country/Running Club/Girls on the Run
- ☐ 4-H
- ☐ Theater
- ☒ Technology Club
- ☐ STEM Club
- ☐ Art Club
- ☐ Other: _____

Sincerely,

Lucas C. Fowler
Parent/Guardian



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904

302.674.0684

Parent/Guardian Letter RE: Charter Modification

Date: 12/11/19

Parent/Guardian Name: Ardia Bennett

Student Name: [REDACTED]

Current Grade: 4

As the parent/guardian of an Academy of Dover Charter School Student, I am in support of the charter modification request to expand the student enrollment and change the grade configuration to include sixth grade for the 2020/2021 school year.

If the sixth grade is approved to be offered at the Academy of Dover Charter School, I intend to have my child/children attend the Academy through the sixth grade.

Desired Activities (Check all that apply)

- ☒ Academic Afterschool Tutoring
- ☐ Odyssey of the Mind/Academic Challenge
- ☒ Reading Club
- ☐ Student Government
- ☐ Yearbook
- ☐ Music
- ☒ Dance
- ☒ Cheerleading
- ☐ Basketball
- ☐ Soccer
- ☐ Cross Country/Running Club/Girls on the Run
- ☒ 4-H
- ☐ Theater
- ☒ Technology Club
- ☐ STEM Club
- ☒ Art Club
- ☐ Other: _____

Sincerely,

Parent/Guardian



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904

302.674.0684

Parent/Guardian Letter RE: Charter Modification

Date: 12/11/2019

Parent/Guardian Name: Jessie Kofke

Student Name: [REDACTED]

Current Grade: 6

As the parent/guardian of an Academy of Dover Charter School Student, I am in support of the charter modification request to expand the student enrollment and change the grade configuration to include sixth grade for the 2020/2021 school year.

If the sixth grade is approved to be offered at the Academy of Dover Charter School, I intend to have my child/children attend the Academy through the sixth grade.

Desired Activities (Check all that apply)

- ☒ Academic Afterschool Tutoring
- ☐ Odyssey of the Mind/Academic Challenge
- ☒ Reading Club
- ☐ Student Government
- ☐ Yearbook
- ☒ Music
- ☒ Dance
- ☒ Cheerleading
- ☐ Basketball
- ☐ Soccer
- ☐ Cross Country/Running Club/Girls on the Run
- ☒ 4-H
- ☒ Theater
- ☐ Technology Club
- ☐ STEM Club
- ☒ Art Club
- ☐ Other: _____

Sincerely,

Parent/Guardian



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904

302.674.0684

Parent/Guardian Letter RE: Charter Modification

Date: 12/11/19

Parent/Guardian Name: Jennifer Jurczak

Student Name: [REDACTED]

Current Grade: 4th

As the parent/guardian of an Academy of Dover Charter School Student, I am in support of the charter modification request to expand the student enrollment and change the grade configuration to include sixth grade for the 2020/2021 school year.

_____ If the sixth grade is approved to be offered at the Academy of Dover Charter School, I intend to have my child/children attend the Academy through the sixth grade.

Desired Activities (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Academic Afterschool Tutoring
- ☐ Odyssey of the Mind/Academic Challenge
- ☐ Reading Club
- ☐ Student Government
- ☐ Yearbook
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Cheerleading
- ☐ Basketball
- ☐ Soccer
- ☐ Cross Country/Running Club/Girls on the Run
- ☐ 4-H
- ☐ Theater
- ☒ Technology Club
- ☒ STEM Club
- ☒ Art Club
- ☐ Other: _____

Sincerely,

Jennifer Jurczak
Parent/Guardian



ACADEMY OF DOVER

104 Saulsbury Road, Dover, DE 19904
302.674.0684

Appendix C – Research Studies

SIXTH GRADERS IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS FARE WORSE THAN PEERS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, STUDY FINDS

Study also finds that the negative effects of grouping sixth graders with older students are lasting and persist at least through ninth grade

BY DUKE TODAY STAFF

Sixth graders placed in middle schools have more discipline problems and lower test scores than their peers who attend elementary schools, according to a study by researchers at Duke University and the University of California, Berkeley.

In addition, the negative effects of grouping sixth graders with older students are lasting and persist at least through ninth grade.

"These findings cast serious doubt on the wisdom of the historic nationwide shift to the grades 6-8 middle school format," said Philip Cook, Duke professor of public policy and economics and an author of the paper.

In the 1970s, less than 25 percent of middle schools included sixth grade. Now, the figure is 75 percent nationwide and 90 percent in North Carolina, which has led the trend toward grades 6-8 middle schools. The shift took place in part due to school population pressures, but also because educators believed it was developmentally appropriate.

"What's been lacking in the debate is any real data on how the school configuration affects student behavior and performance," Cook said. "As it turns out, moving sixth grade out of elementary school appears to have had substantial costs."

Jacob Vigdor and Clara Muschkin, Cook's colleagues at Duke's Sanford Institute of Public Policy, and Robert MacCoun of UC Berkeley co-authored the report,

"Should Sixth Grade Be in Elementary or Middle School? An Analysis of Grade Configuration and Student Behavior." The report is available online as a Sanford Institute working paper at <www.pubpol.duke.edu/research/papers/>.

The researchers contrasted sixth graders attending North Carolina's grade 6-8 middle schools with those attending grade K-6 elementary schools. The data pertained to 44,709 sixth-graders in 243 schools in 99 districts.

The sixth graders attending middle school were more than twice as likely to be disciplined as those attending elementary school, after accounting for socioeconomic and demographic differences in the groups. Drug-related disciplinary incidents were nearly four times greater among the middle school group. The pattern continued as the sixth graders advanced through the grades, suggesting the problems were not tied solely to the transition to a new school environment.

In addition, sixth graders in elementary schools improved their scores on end-of-grade exams in math and reading relative to their peers in middle schools, and those gains persisted through ninth grade.

Although the study didn't pinpoint the causes for the differences, the authors concluded that the 6-8 middle school structure brought impressionable sixth graders into routine contact with older adolescents who were a bad influence. Older adolescents are more rebellious and more involved in delinquency, sex, illicit drugs and other activities that violate school rules, the authors noted.

"This points to a general pattern whereby it is better for kids to make transitions later rather than earlier," said Vigdor, a co-author. "Sixth grade is an especially vulnerable time, in the sense that sixth graders display a strong susceptibility to peer influence and the decision to expose them to slightly older or slightly younger students seems to have a lasting impact."

Contact: Karen Kemp
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Email: karen.kemp@duke.edu

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Should Sixth Grade Be in Elementary School or Middle School?

Updated April 06, 2018 | by Grace Chen

Should sixth graders be placed in elementary or middle school? We explore the pros and cons of the issue.



Sixth grade has been described as a major crossroads of a child's development. Thus, it would seem important to place sixth graders in the proper environment during this critical period. Curiously, a decades-long debate continues regarding whether sixth graders are better off in elementary school or middle school. After looking at common characteristics of sixth graders, this article examines the pros and cons for each approach. Although a 2007 study concluded that sixth graders in elementary school behave and test better than sixth graders in middle school, 75 percent of school districts in the U.S. place sixth graders in middle school. Moreover, school district decisions to place sixth grade in elementary or middle school are sometimes based on purely financial considerations. The article concludes with some tips for parents who are concerned about sending their sixth graders to middle school.

What Are Sixth Graders Like?

Educators agree that sixth graders are an unusually diverse group to which few generalizations apply. They are all moving from childhood to adolescence, but each one seems to be moving at a different pace. Here are some milestones that parents can expect as their children approach and enter sixth grade:

- Children mature physically around the time of sixth grade. Girls become concerned about their physical appearance as their bodies begin to change. Boys may gain a lot of height and may start to shave. These physical changes often occur before children develop the emotional maturity to deal with them.
- Girls mature physically sooner than boys.
- Children begin to notice boys and girls of the opposite sex and feel attracted to them in ways they may not understand.
- A child's peer group becomes more important than his or her family. Peer pressure becomes a powerful force. Some distance may grow between the child and the parents.
- Children experience emotional changes that may leave them confused, angry, or rebellious.
- Children may show maturity in some ways and remain completely childish in other ways.
- Compared to prior generations, sixth graders today are exposed to more adult experiences at earlier ages.
- Some sixth graders are sexually active or have experimented with drugs or alcohol.

The Debate

Given all the physical and emotional changes that are going on in the lives of sixth graders, would they be better off as the highest grade in elementary school or as the lowest grade in middle school? Elementary school and middle schools differ in many aspects. In elementary schools, sixth graders spend most of the day with the same teacher and classmates in the same classroom. There is less freedom because the students are carefully monitored. In contrast, middle school children have several teachers for different subjects and move from classroom to classroom throughout the day. Middle schools allow more freedom because the faculty and staff have less opportunity to monitor the students. Middle schools stress academic achievement more than elementary schools.

Sixth graders were moved between elementary schools and middle schools throughout the 20th century. At first, sixth graders attended elementary school with grades one through eight. Then schools began to cut off elementary school at grade six. Seventh through ninth graders were placed in a junior high or middle school, which was supposed to bridge the gap between elementary and high schools. In 1970, only 25 percent of sixth graders were placed in middle schools. During the 1970's through 2000, however, millions of sixth graders were transferred to middle schools and ninth graders were moved to high schools. Seventy-five percent of sixth graders nationwide now go to middle school. The tide may be turning again, however, in favor of returning sixth-graders to elementary school.

Factors Favoring Sixth Grade in Elementary School

- Sixth graders in middle school have more behavioral problems than their peers in elementary school. In a highly-regarded 2007 study of public school students in North Carolina, a group at Duke University's Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy looked at behavior to evaluate whether sixth graders were better off in elementary school or middle school. After appropriate adjustments for socioeconomic and demographic factors, the study showed that sixth graders attending elementary school were less likely to have discipline problems than their middle school counterparts. Moreover, the discrepancy in discipline problems continued through the eighth and ninth grades. Studies have shown that disciplinary problems correspond with low academic achievement.
- Sixth graders in elementary school test higher than those in middle school. The Duke study also considered test scores. The researchers found that sixth graders in elementary school scored higher than their peers in middle school on standardized end-of-grade tests. A recent study in the Philadelphia the school system concurred with the Duke study. According to school superintendent Paul Vallas, the study showed that sixth graders in elementary schools perform better on standardized tests than those in middle schools. In response, Philadelphia is reducing the number of middle schools from 46 to eight and placing the sixth graders in elementary schools.
- Sixth graders in middle school are exposed to older teens which may have a negative influence on them. Children in the sixth grade are at a point in their lives when they are easily influenced by their peers. Keeping the sixth graders in elementary school gives them another year to mature before they are exposed to older adolescents
- Middle schools are usually larger than elementary schools. Rightly or wrongly, middle schools have reputation of seeming large, uninviting, and impersonal. Middle schools have been referred to as the lost stepchildren of the education system. Many parents and teachers believe that sixth graders do better in a smaller, more nurturing setting where there are fewer classmates and more one-on-one contact with the teacher.
- Middle schools tend to be located tend further away from home than elementary schools. Probably because there are fewer middle schools than elementary schools, many parents find that the middle school is further away from home than the elementary school. They do not like the idea of their sixth graders being so far away. They also question whether a longer commute is appropriate for sixth graders.

Factors in Favor of Sixth Grade in Middle School

- Sixth graders in middle school have greater access to extracurricular activities. In one Michigan school district, the sixth grade will be moved to middle school beginning the 2008-2009 school year. The officials noted that at middle school the sixth graders would have access to more extracurricular activities, such as art, band, music, and athletics. It was also noted, however, that the restructuring would allow the middle school to service 50 more students in the same building with three less teachers.
- Placing sixth grade in middle school allows sixth graders more independence. Another school district recently announced that sixth grade would move to middle school in order

to give sixth graders more independence. The district had tried to make the change a year before, but opposition from parents caused a delay.

- Middle schools may offer innovative programs in which sixth graders may be eager to participate. Parents of students in one school district in Ohio were excited about enrolling their sixth graders in an expanded middle school because of the school's innovative programs. The school admitted only 25 students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Students, who are allowed to study at their own pace, are grouped by age levels rather than grade levels. The classes are divided into smaller advisory groups in which one adult mentor remains with the students for three years.

What Do Kids Think?

Right before fifth graders in a Michigan elementary school were going to start sixth grade in middle school, the board of education decided to move the sixth grade from middle school to the elementary school. So, children who had anticipated going to middle school had to adjust to the fact that they were remaining in their elementary school. The change was made as part of a restructuring plan to reduce costs. Later, the children were interviewed about their experience. Many children admitted that they were disappointed on first learning of the change. After completing sixth grade, however, most of them were glad that they had one more year in elementary school.

Financial Considerations May Prevail

Sometimes a move of six graders from an elementary school to a middle school, or vice versa, is simply a matter of financial necessity. Public school systems all over the country are experiencing cutbacks because of decreased federal and state funding. For example, if the elementary schools are too crowded and the facilities cannot be expanded, a school district may be forced to relocate the sixth graders, especially if there is extra room in the middle schools. There is anecdotal evidence that many schools districts which are moving sixth graders this time are doing so not based on any of the factors considered above but rather because of budgetary constraints or declining enrollment. The following are a few examples.

- A Florida school district moved its fifth grade to middle school in response to declining enrollment.
- A school district in Massachusetts was forced to consider moving the fifth grade from elementary to middle school. Numerous school districts in the state already had fifth graders attending middle school. The reaction by parents, teachers, and school board members was mixed. One school official commented that the move would free up space to offer more programs at the elementary schools.
- Because of budgetary shortfalls, one school district in Maryland closed its only middle school, transferring sixth and seventh grades to elementary schools and ninth grade to a high school. The restructuring saved the district \$4 to \$5 million.
- Sixth grade was added to two Kansas elementary schools to compensate for their declining enrollment.

Tips for Concerned Parents

If your child is attending sixth grade in middle school and you would prefer that the child be in elementary school, here are some suggestions for making the best of it:

- Continue to be as involved in your child's education as you were during the elementary school years.
- Talk with your fifth grader about the differences between elementary and middle schools. Discuss the changes that he or she will experience in middle school.
- Once your child gets his or her schedule, go to the middle school and walk with your child from classroom to classroom according to the schedule. Locate the cafeteria, the restrooms, and the lockers.
- Support a transition program in which fifth graders spend time at the middle school before leaving fifth grade.
- Confirm that the sixth graders are physically separated from the older students in a separate section of the school.

Above all, parents should be informed activists and advocates for their children. If your school district announces that the sixth graders are being moved to middle school and you do not think the move would be in your child's best interests, attend hearings and school board meetings and urge other parents to do so. Be vocal in your opposition. Find out why the school district is proposing the change and suggest alternative solutions. It is not unheard of for school districts to abandon plans in the face of strong parental opposition.

Conclusion

The sixth grade is a critical time in a child's education because it is a time of physical and emotional transition from childhood to adolescence. The real answer to where a sixth grader belongs depends on the particular sixth grader. There are some children who would be better off in middle school because they are mature enough to deal with the extra challenges. Other sixth graders are unprepared for such a drastic change and need the security of an elementary school. When decisions have to be made for whole classes of sixth graders, however, the factors in favor of keeping sixth graders in elementary school seem to outweigh the reasons for placing them in middle school.

Questions? Contact us on Twitter. [@publicschoolreview](#)