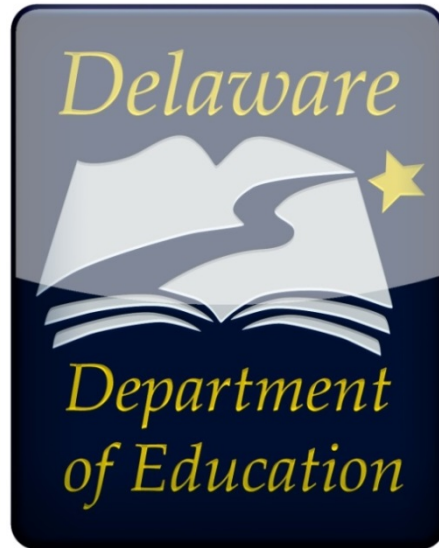


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



ACADEMY OF DOVER RENEWAL APPLICATION FINAL REPORT

CSAC Final Meeting: November 23, 2021
CSAC Final Report Published: November 30, 2021

By September 30, 2021, Academy of Dover Charter School (AOD) submitted an application to renew its charter. Consideration of this application is in accordance with the applicable provisions of 14 Del. C. § 514A and 14 DE Admin. Code § 275. Written renewal application guidance is provided by the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) on its website. The renewal application template developed by DDOE is aligned to measures and targets within the Performance Framework, which outlines the academic, organizational and fiscal standards by which all Delaware charter schools are evaluated. The evaluation of the school's performance as measured by the Framework is a major component of the decision on the renewal application.

This report serves as a summary of the strengths, areas of follow-up and/or concerns identified by members of the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) during their review of the charter applicant's renewal application, Performance Review Reports, Annual Reports and Performance Agreements and during CSAC meetings.

Under 29 Del. C. § 10006A(e) CSAC is permitted to hold a fully virtual meeting without an anchor location during a state of emergency. On July 13, 2021, the Governor of the State of Delaware issued a Declaration of a Public Health Emergency for the entire state. Governor Carney extended the Public Health Emergency on October 7, 2021.

The following individuals attended the Final Meeting of CSAC on November 23, 2021:

Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- Kim Klein, Chairperson of CSAC and Associate Secretary of Operations Support, DDOE
- Gregory Fulkerson, Ph.D., Education Associate, Academic Support, DDOE
- Joyce Leatherbury, Education Associate, Academic Support, DDOE
- April McCrae, Ed.D., Education Associate, Academic Support, DDOE
- Tiffany Green, Education Associate, Educator Support, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Operations Support, DDOE
- Brian Moore, Education Associate, School Support, DDOE
- Charles Taylor, Community Member
- Ted Molin, Community Member

Ex-Officio Members (Non-voting)

- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter School Network
- Vincent Lofink, Delaware State Board of Education

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Leroy Travers, Lead Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John H. Carwell Jr., Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Alicia Balcerak, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office, DDOE

Representatives of Academy of Dover

- Kimeu Boynton, Board President
- Ashley Murphy, Board Member
- Ms. Lauren Comegys, Board Teacher Representative
- Michele Marinucci, Ed.D. Head of School
- David Hudson, Assistant Head of School
- Debra Geraldj, Deputy Assistant Principal
- Jennifer Bartsch, Financial Specialist

Discussion

Ms. Klein stated that the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) held its initial meeting on October 19, 2021 and the CSAC issued its Initial Report on October 25, 2021. The school was provided an opportunity to submit a response to the CSAC Initial Report by November 9, 2021 and the school submitted a timely response. Ms. Klein also stated that the Department of Education and State Board of Education held a virtual initial joint public hearing on November 1, 2021. Ms. Klein stated that the purpose of the CSAC Final meeting was for the CSAC to continue its review of the Renewal Application, pursue any areas of concern through a discussion with the applicant, and issue recommendations on the application. She added that the CSAC would issue a final report on the application no later than November 30, 2021. Ms. Klein noted that the minutes for the CSAC Initial Meeting on October 19, 2021 were distributed

in advance. She then asked if there were any amendments to the minutes as presented. The motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes and was carried unanimously.

Mr. Travers asked each individual voting and non-voting member of CSAC to raise any questions or concerns regarding the application that require further discussion. Mr. Lofink stated the following questions which are followed by Dr. Marinucci's responses.

1. AOD has shown noticeable improvement across its academic, organizational, and financial performance framework reports since the leadership change occurred in 2019. In response to question 37 of the renewal application regarding school quality and student success, the school noted that an increase in highly qualified staff would increase student performance. How is highly qualified staff defined?

Dr. Marinucci stated that she requires prospective teachers to meet state certification requirements. When a position opens applicants are screened based on current certification or eligibility for certification and those are the candidates that move forward for the interview process.

2. There appears to have been a significant turnover of staff when the new leadership came on board. The school noted that this was due to the new leadership setting a higher standard for its educators. What percentage of teachers and school leaders were certified before the leadership change versus now?

Dr. Marinucci stated that, prior to her arrival, a number of staff had chosen to transition to other positions outside of AOD. After she joined the school, she communicated her vision and expectations to increase rigor and, essentially, operate the school as if their children were in every classroom. Some staff decided to seek employment elsewhere. Additionally, there were some uncertified staff who were given a certain amount of time to meet certification requirements. Some staff chose to transition into different positions at AOD and others sought employment elsewhere based on the new expectations and requirements. All staff are currently certified or eligible for certification.

Mr. Travers asked if any other individual voting and non-voting members of the CSAC had any questions or concerns regarding the application that require further discussion. Ms. Massett commented that Dr. Marinucci's leadership and expectations are the key drivers of AOD's student performance outcomes as opposed to certification requirements.

Conclusion

Ms. Klein asked if there was a motion to recommend that Academy of Dover has met the standard for charter operations under the charter school law and, therefore, its charter should be renewed for a five-year term beginning on July 1, 2022 with or without conditions. The motion was made and seconded to recommend approval without any conditions and was

carried unanimously. Ms. Klein reminded the school that the CSAC's recommendation was just that: a recommendation to the Secretary of Education on the renewal application.

Next Steps:

- The public comment period closes on December 8, 2021
- The Secretary of Education will announce her decision at the December 16, 2021 State Board of Education meeting and ask for the assent of the State Board.