

CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Positive Outcomes Charter School

Charter Renewal

Initial Report

October 24, 2023

As is required, Positive Outcomes Charter School (Positive Outcomes) submitted an application to renew its charter for a term of five years. The purpose of the initial meeting is for the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) to review the renewal application in light of the relevant statutory criteria for renewal.

The following attended the initial meeting of CSAC on October 17, 2023:

Voting Committee Members

- Kim Klein, Associate Secretary of Operations Support, Chairperson
- Aimee Beam, Education Associate, School Support
- Gregory Fulkerson, Education Associate, Academic Support
- Tiffany Green, Education Associate, Workforce Support
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Operations Support
- Joyce Leatherbury, Education Associate, Academic Support
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Academic Support
- Ted Molin, Community Member

Ex-Officio Members (Non-voting)

- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter School Network
- Shawn Brittingham, President, Delaware State Board of Education

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Leroy Travers, Director, Charter School Office
- Alicia Balcerak, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office
- Faye Schilling, Education Specialist, Charter School Office

Representatives of Positive Outcomes

- Susan Willis, Board President
- Edward Emmett, Director
- Rhiannon Dillon, Teacher
- Michelle Hastie, Business Manager
- Rachel Hohman, Dean of Student Supports and Services
- Patti Kobus, Dean of Academics and Instruction
- Julie Landis, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- Steven Norman, Board Member
- Megan Yeager, Special Education Coordinator

Positive Outcomes was given time to provide an overview of the school.

Mr. Emmet shared that this was Positive Outcome's sixth renewal and 28th year serving students from all three counties in Delaware. Currently, Positive Outcomes serves 122 students from seven school districts. Students are mainly from the Caesar Rodney, Capital, and Lake Forest School Districts; however, other districts are represented. Mr. Emmett shared a video featuring Positive Outcomes students and staff, which provided specific details about the school and the unique way it supports students that previously struggled in traditional school settings. Students and staff explained the customized approach used at Positive Outcomes such as small class size and student to teacher ratios, along with individualized learning experiences captured through service learning, Learning Through Interest (LTI), and Exhibition Learning. That video can be found at this link.

Initial CSAC Questions and Feedback

Staff / Licensure and Certification / Evaluations

1. Has the goal setting for administrators been completed for the 2023/2024 school year?
 - a. If so, when was it completed? If not, what is the plan for completion?

A - Goal setting for administrators is in progress. Board member Steve Norman is Mr. Emmett's evaluator. Mr. Emmett has submitted his forms to Mr. Norman, and they will be meeting on Wednesday, October 18 to discuss. Mr. Emmett is the evaluator for both Ms. Kobus and Ms. Hohman. Mr. Emmett anticipates that the goal setting for these administrators will be complete in the next week or two. Ms. Kobus has also started this process and goal setting is near completion with all instructional staff.
2. What is the current staff to student ratio?

A - The current staff to student ratio is as follows:

 - 1 to 8.7 teacher to student ratio;
 - 1 to 5.5 teacher/para/academic support personnel to student ratio;
 - 1 to 61 counselor to student ratio;
 - collectively 1 to 3 all staff to student ratio.
3. Positive Outcomes current Professional Growth Plan completion rates are as follows (the recommended time for completion is October 15th):
 - professional growth goals – 0%
 - student improvement goals – 0%
 - a. Share your experience with completing professional growth and student improvement goals. Have there been any challenges in completing either?

A - Currently, 87% of teachers have completed professional growth goals and 83% have completed student improvement goals. This year, professional growth goals included the completion of a self-evaluation. For student improvement goals most educators are using Star English / Language Arts (ELA) and Math data; however, for measure C, interim assessments aligned to the Smarter Balance test

are being used. Some measures have changed; however, and Ms. Kobus is working with staff to make the necessary adjustments.

- b. Describe your plan for completing professional growth and student improvement goals.
A - Ms. Kobus is having ongoing conversations with staff. Ms. Kobus anticipates all goal setting should be complete by the end of the week.
 - c. Have the three Delaware Teacher Growth and Support System (DTGSS) observations been scheduled to ensure that each observation is completed in a timely manner? The recommendation is to complete round one before December 1st, round two before March 1st, and round three before May 15th. Explain your schedule or your plan for scheduling and completion?
A - The schedule for observations has been completed. The first round of observations will be complete by the end of October or early November. The second round of observations will be complete by the end of January.
4. According to information in the mentoring center there are two educators in year two of the comprehensive induction program and four educators in year three.
- a. Are there educators in year one of the program?
A - There are no educators in year one; however, there are seven in year three, and one in year two.
 - b. When will year two mentees be assigned a mentor for the 2023-2024 school year in the mentoring center?
A - All mentees have been assigned.
 - c. Has mentoring begun for them? The recommendation is that all mentees are assigned within 30 days of employment and that they are all assigned in the mentoring center by October.
A - Mentoring has begun for all mentees.
 - d. Have year three mentees begun their mentoring requirements with the lead mentor's guidance? If not, when will they begin?
A - Year three participants have received their materials and are working with mentors to complete timelines.
5. Submit a full staff listing with assignment and each staff member's current licensure and certification status.
A - This document will be submitted.
6. Submit Positive Outcomes' salary schedule / table.
A - Positive Outcomes uses the Caesar Rodney School District scale as a guide and strives to be at 95% of CRSD's scale. The school will submit a salary scale for all employees. Ms. Massett added that charter schools are not required to operate on a salary scale and are not required to follow the state's salary scale. Ms. Massett stated that all requests for information should be related to the statutory criteria for renewal and the charter's academic, financial and organizational performance. Ms. Massett does not believe that a salary scale fits that requirement. Ms. Klein replied that the salary scale

may directly affect a school's financial performance and may affect a school's academic performance.

CSAC Follow-up for Staff / Licensure and Certification / Evaluations

Tiffany Green- There are seven teachers in year three of mentoring; however, not all of those teachers appear in Data Service Center. Explain why those individuals are not in Data Service Center.

A - There are seven teachers in year three; however, two of those teachers will not be in mentoring center because they participate in Jobs for Delaware Graduates (JDG). JDG updates that information. One employee is working to complete certification requirements. Once certification is corrected and the school will email Ms. Green with updated certification information.

Academic Performance and Framework

7. Page nine of the application reads, "*It is essential to note that all data was impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*" This was again noted on page 14 in reference to absenteeism where the percentage of students who missed less than 10% of school days decreased over time from a high of nearly 79% in 2019 to a low of nearly 55% in 2023. However, the percent proficient for Smarter Balance ELA have been significantly better since COVID. Math and science proficiencies fluctuate, but the average rates are increasing. Social Studies illustrates a significant increase. Reflect on these data points with reference to the fact that student proficiency in most subjects was relatively good (when adjusting for participation) especially in 2022 compared with years prior to the pandemic. While there may have been a cohort effect, were there specific instructional or programmatic shifts taken by Positive Outcomes that allowed them to work within the constraints of student absenteeism to achieve such moderate performance increases post-COVID?

A - When looking at this data, it is important to establish context. There are certain data points that are concerning, specifically as they relate to long-term effects. One challenge is that typically there is five years of state level data; however, due to COVID-19, there is only one good year of data. Although there have been improvements, the school always reevaluates how and where improvements can be made. One area of concern is attendance. The percentage of students missing more than ten days of school is 45%. This is problematic, particularly when trying to recover from learning deficits caused by the pandemic. Therefore, staff is working to remind and educate students and parents of why it is important to be in school.

CSAC Follow-up for Academic Performance and Framework

April McCrae- In the application it appears as though the school is saying that, in general, the pandemic negatively impacted student performance. However, state level data shows that students are performing well. Ms. McCrae asked the school to comment on anything positive that is being done to lead to student performance increases?

A. The school has been auditing curriculum for the past two years. Using teacher input and data Positive Outcomes shifted to a new ELA and Math curriculum. The school is working to ensure that students have access to High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), along with more tools to identify progress in Science and Social Studies.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development

8. How have Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) been implemented?

A - Systems and processes have been in place; however, a formal plan was not written. For example, weekly monitoring and check-ins with the building level team in relation to academics, social/emotional factors, attendance, and special education was already in place. However, once the process was formalized, the school began to look at how can progress monitoring could be used and get this information to teachers differently. MTSS has been helpful in formalizing how Positive Outcomes looks at a student. Issues are no longer are we addressed in silos, but a complete picture of a student's performance are analyzed and how social, emotional, behavioral, and academic issues are related. After formalizing the plan, the school has added an intervention period and aligned specific strategies and interventions for students during that time. Positive Outcomes has enhanced tier 1 by equipping all teachers with the strategies, tools, and resources to design and carry out effective programming. Tier 2 strategies are happening directly in the classroom, with the help from support staff, and under the direction of the teacher. In addition, staff and students have guided data conversations. Including student promotes buy-in and enables them to care about their personal progress.

9. The school did not meet the standard for curriculum in visual and performing arts and health and physical education. Continue to work with the Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development (CIPD) workgroup to address all expectations.

A – The school is working with Lauren Conrad to submit the required materials for visual and performing arts. In addition, they are working with Sabra Collins to develop a health and physical education curriculum.

CSAC Follow-up for Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development

Ted Molin- What new math curriculum did Positive Outcomes select?

A - The school selected Houghton Mifflin's Into Math curriculum. It has diagnostic tests, which help to target specific skills that are lacking. It includes re-teaching resources, as well. There is a learning curve; however. The school will continue to make sure that teachers have resources and professional support to effectively use this new curriculum.

The follow items were requested as follow-ups to this meeting:

1. Submit the school's salary scale.
2. Submit a full staff listing with assignment and each staff member's current licensure and certification status.
3. Ensure that all curriculum areas meet standard.

Next Steps:

- An initial public hearing will take place on October 24th at 5:00 p.m. (3rd Floor Conference Room, DDOE (Delaware Department of Education), 401 Federal Street, Dover, DE 19901)
- The applicant will have the opportunity to submit a written response to the CSAC initial report, which is due by close of business November 8th.
- A second and final meeting of CSAC will be held on November 21st.
- On or before November 28th, CSAC will issue its final report including its recommendation on the renewal.