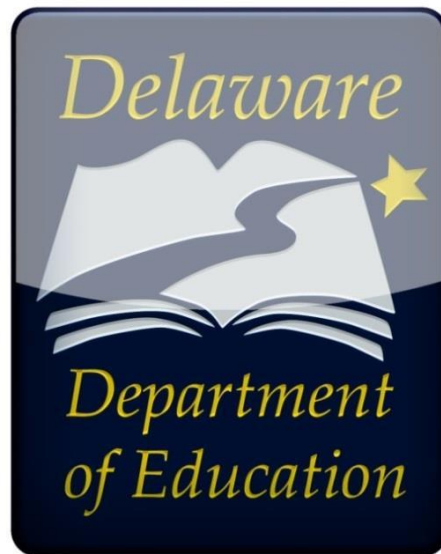


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Charter School of New Castle

**RENEWAL APPLICATION
FINAL REPORT**

CSAC Final Meeting: December 2, 2019
CSAC Final Report Published: December 6, 2019

By September 30, 2019, Charter School of New Castle submitted an application to renew its charter. Consideration of this application is in accordance with the applicable provisions of 14 **Del. C.** Ch. 5, including § 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. The decision on the renewal application is based on a comprehensive review, guided, in part, by the following three questions:

1. Is the academic program a success?
2. Is the school financially viable?
3. Is the school organizationally sound?

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 individual reviews of the charter applicant's renewal application, Performance Review Reports, Annual Reports and Performance Agreements and during the CSAC meetings.

The following were in attendance at the Final Meeting of the CSAC on December 2, 2019:

Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- Chuck Longfellow, Ed.D., Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee, Associate Secretary of Education, DDOE
- Susan Keene Haberstroh, Ed.D., Director, School Support Services, DDOE
- Raushann Austin, Education Associate, Educator Support Team, DDOE
- Catherine Oravez, Education Associate, Finance Office, DDOE
- Gregory Fulkerson, Ph.D., Education Associate, Academic Support, DDOE
- April McCrae, Ed.D., Education Associate, Academic Support, DDOE
- Susan Veneema, Education Associate, Academic Support, DDOE
- Chuck Taylor, Community Member, Retired Head of School

Ex-Officio Members (Non-voting)

- Audrey Noble, Ph.D., Vice President, Delaware State Board of Education
- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter Networks

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Darryl Parson, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee, Delaware Department of Justice
- Leroy Travers, Lead Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Finance Office, DDOE
- Jennifer Roussel, Administrative Secretary, Operations Support, DDOE

Representatives of Charter School

- Charles McDowell, Board President
- Rachel Valentin, Executive Director, Elementary School
- LaRetha Odumosu, Ph.D., Executive Director, Middle School
- Amy Novasel, Assistant Principal of Instruction
- Michelle Lambert, External Accountant

Discussion

Dr. Longfellow stated that an initial public hearing was held on November 13, 2019 and the CSAC Initial Meeting was held on October 30, 2019. He added that the CSAC Initial Report was issued on November 7, 2019 and the school submitted a timely response.

Dr. Longfellow stated that the purpose of the CSAC Final Meeting was for the CSAC to continue its review of the Renewal Application, probe any areas of concern through a discussion with the applicant, and to issue a recommendation on the renewal application to the Secretary of Education. Dr. Longfellow added that a final report will be issued no later than December 6, 2019.

Dr. Longfellow stated that at the initial meeting on October 30, 2019, the CSAC identified areas that required a response and/or additional information from the school. This information included:

1. Academic Performance
 - a. **English Language Proficiency:** Plans for interventions to improve English Language proficiency.
 - b. **Educational Program:** The curriculum review conducted by department's Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development workgroup noted that:
 - English Language Arts – met expectations
 - Mathematics – met expectations
 - Science – partially met expectations
 - Social Studies – did not meet expectations
 - Visual and Performing Arts – did not meet expectations
2. Financial Performance
 - a. **Budget Narrative:** Submit updated budget narrative specifying where summer pay obligations are reserved.
 - b. **Closure Requirements:** Identify individuals responsible for handling the school's final closeout activities.
 - c. **Projected Enrollment Chart (Application Section 6.1):** Submit a revised chart (see Appendix 2) reflecting the school's projected authorized enrollment over the next five years. (Note: This will be used to determine the school's compliance with the 14 Del. Code § 506 (c)(1) which provides that "On or before April 1 of each school year, a charter school shall have enrolled, at a minimum, 80% of its total authorized number of students")
3. Application for a Major Charter Modification
 - a. If necessary, submit a revised mission statement that aligns with the legislative intent. (**Note: The school has with withdrawn its modification application.**)

Dr. Longfellow asked each member if they had any comments or questions regarding the school's response to the CSAC Initial Report. Dr. McCrae stated that DDOE's Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development (CIPD) workgroup approved the school's submission. CIPD's Debora Hansen requested that the school contact her for additional information regarding its Visual and Performing Arts curricula.

Dr. Noble stated that the school's response regarding improving student English language was unclear and asked the school to clarify the differences between its response to the initial report and the information provided in its renewal application. Dr. Odumuso noted that English language instruction will be more strategic. She added that last year, there was a daily push-in/pull-out schedule to provide individualized support and small group instruction. This year, she added, CSNC hired a new assistant principal, with experience in serving English learners, who will lead the strategic efforts. Ms. Valentin added that vocabulary interventions have been critical in working with English learners. Therefore, an increased amount of vocabulary has been added to the guided reading lessons.

Dr. Noble asked the school to provide an update regarding its mortgage loan, pending balloon payment and whether the loan was refinanced. Mr. McDowell stated that the loan was refinanced on December 1, 2019. He added that the terms of the loan provide the school with two 1-year extensions and the school has exercised the first 1-year extension. Mr. McDowell explained that the school intends to exercise the second 1-year extension but the lender will not consider the second request this far in advance. Dr. Noble asked the school to describe its plans for the loan after two years. Mr. McDowell stated that the school plans to sell their 1101 Delaware Street property and retire the loan. He added that if the property is not sold, then the school would seek to refinance the loan with the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor Research Fund, Inc. (NCALL).

Dr. Longfellow asked each member if they had any questions of comments regarding the application that required further discussion. There were none.

Conclusion

Dr. Longfellow then asked if there was a motion to recommend that this applicant meets the standard for charter operations under the charter school law and therefore its charter should be renewed for a five-year term beginning July 1, 2020 with or without conditions. The motion was made and seconded to recommend approval without any conditions and was carried. There was one abstention, Dr. Fulkerson, who did not attend the CSAC Initial Meeting.

Dr. Longfellow reminded the school that the CSAC's recommendation was just that: a recommendation to the Secretary of Education on the renewal application.

Next Steps:

- On or before December 6, 2019, the CSAC will issue a Final Report, which will include its recommendation on the Renewal Application.
- The public comment period closes on December 13, 2019.
- The Secretary of Education will announce her decision at the December 19, 2019, State Board of Education meeting.