

November 14, 2023

Leroy Travers
The Townsend Building
Charter School Accountability Committee
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Charter School Accountability Committee,

On behalf of the Community Education Building, I am writing to express our support for Great Oaks Charter School in their application for a renewal of their charter. As the CEO of the Community Education Building since the 2016-2017 school year, I have observed and supported a school that has maintained as its highest priority the welfare and education of their students. At Great Oaks, a student is not just a number or a data point, but an individual with a voice and a purpose.

This unrelenting focus on, and commitment to, Wilmington's youth is the reason that, despite some extraordinary conditions and events, Great Oaks has continued to serve their students. Having been a school leader myself, I can confirm that the easiest path for the board and leadership over the years would have been to walk away. But they did not walk away. They became stronger. As a result, the school is now thriving, and students are experiencing a sense of belonging and purpose.

The current school leadership has ushered in tremendous improvement in student and staff culture. This is reflected in dramatic improvements in attendance and student engagement. It is also reflected in a very tangible way when you walk into any classroom and see an energized teacher facilitating learning with highly engaged students who are asking clarifying questions, seeking deeper explanations, and experiencing the joy of learning. Not surprisingly, this has led to a significant reduction in school incidents.

Great Oaks serves resilient students who come to school with significant trauma, many of whom are self-raised and/or are raising siblings and living in some of the poorest areas of the city. Thirteen percent (13%) are justice-involved, and thirty seven percent (37%) have IEPs. Despite the high level of support needed, the teachers and leaders are meeting the needs of students through targeted school-based and community-based support, and students are thriving in the small and intimate school environment where they have access to personalized support. Most remarkably, they are accomplishing this with a viable balanced budget.

CEB has and will continue to walk alongside Great Oaks to provide additional resources and opportunities to their students and families through authentic collaboration with the school staff. Our Family Resource Center programs and resources and the Student Advocacy System provide added assurance that students have what they need at school and at home to reach their potential. We remain committed to supporting the success of Great Oaks' students through ongoing collaboration with grant writing, shared partnerships, and school-to-community connections.

Great Oaks may not fit the traditional model for a public school in Delaware, but there is little question that the school is on an upward trajectory and is providing a much needed and desired learning experience to youth and families in Wilmington. Wilmington's youth need Great Oaks Charter School to remain open.

Sincerely,



Linda J. Jennings
Chief Executive Officer



11/6/2023

Good evening,

I am a huge fan of Great Oaks and what it provides for the students we support. I started at Great Oaks back in 2018 and left due to relocation. When I returned to Delaware this year, I knew for a fact that Great Oaks was where I wanted to be. I 100% support the vision for our school. Although it is a change for me teaching high school students, I know that the goal to ensure our students are successful remains the same. What we do is even more impactful at the high school level because we are encouraging our students to do what needs to be done to have a bright future as young adults. I especially enjoy being able to individualize the science lessons to fit the needs of my students. This would not be possible if we were a traditional high school that doesn't focus on the small classroom sizes. I would bet my last dollar that the support we provide here is unmatched at any other high school in Delaware. Each and every one of my students know that they are not just a number at Great Oaks. I often hear, "If it weren't for Great Oaks, I don't know where I would be." This lets me know that the work we are doing here is one of a kind and that it is imperative to keep Great Oaks open to continue to be a place of ministry for our youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak my truth about the school that I've witnessed change students from good to great!

Appreciatively,

Ms. Asia Stewart

9th & 10th Grade Science Teacher



Ms. Chalmers <tchalmers@greateoakswilm.org>

Parent Input

1 message

sheena chandler <sisterschandler@gmail.com>
To: Dean Chalmers <tchalmers@greateoakswilm.org>

Thu, Nov 2, 2023 at 9:17 PM

Great Oaks has affected my famliy in so many positive ways. I have watched my twins the last two years grow effectively in their communications skills. Being out going as far as participation. Creatively having enthusiasm about getting up to attend school.

They make a choice to be involved in after school activities with out an push or an inquiry. Great Oaks is a safe place for my children, the staff at Great Oaks have shown me as a parent that they are capable to put out fires when it comes to inter city children.

I would like to take this time to applaud the staff on how they work together as a famliy to accomplish their goals also to accommodate all the famlies along with the children that attend Great Oaks.

The dedication shown makes my daily life so much better. LET'S GO GREAT OAKS!!!

Sincerely,

Cheer Mom

Mr. Patrick G. Francis
Great Oaks Charter High School (GOCHS)
World Languages Teacher (French and

Spanish)

pfrancis@greatoakswilm.org
PHN: 443-406-6803
Monday, November 27, 2023


Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC)

Attn: Honorable members
Caravel State Building
820 North French Street
Wilmington, DE 19802

To whom it may concern:

Good day and compliments of the season. My name is Mr. Francis, and I am the Spanish World Language Teacher at Great Oaks Charter High School (GOCHS). I would like to take a few moments to express my heart-felt gratitude to the administrators of GOCHS for giving me an opportunity to serve. I started my teaching career in the state of Delaware as a Paraprofessional for “at risks” youth with Christina School District and spent several years fine tuning my craft. After receiving my Masters in K-12 Curriculum and Instructions and my teaching credentials from the state of Maryland, GOCHS was one of the first schools that came “knocking” at my door. Even though, I do not consider myself an “urban” person per se, nor have I taught in that setting before, I decided to give it a go. GOCHS serves a unique student population and that is underserved and under-resourced. A considerable number of students here would most likely not have the academic attention and opportunities provided for them at GOCHS, elsewhere. Honestly, meeting all their needs is a challenge, especially when dealing with such a high population of exceptional students. The teachers and administrators are doing their best to foster the academic success of every student. As a seasoned teacher that is still growing professionally, GOCHS is a great environment to hone one’s skills. GOCHS is standing in “the school to prison pipeline’s” proverbial “gap.” In short, therefore, I stand in support of them to be given a chance to grow and I take my “hat off” to all the staff members and administrators who came before me that paved the way through their commitment, dedication, and hard work to give us a chance today.

Respectfully yours,



Mr. P.G. Francis (Spanish)