

CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



First State Military Academy

Charter Renewal

Final Report

November 28, 2023

As is required, First State Military Academy (First State Military) 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 considering the relevant statutory criteria for renewal.

This report serves as a summary of the strengths, areas of follow-up and/or concerns identified by members of the CSAC during their review of the charter applicant's renewal application, performance review reports, annual reports and performance agreements.

The following were in attendance at the final meeting of CSAC on November 21, 2023:

Voting Committee Members

- Kim Klein, Associate Secretary, Operations Support
- Aimee Beam, Education Associate, School Support
- Gregory Fulkerson, Education Associate, Academic 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
- Deb Stevens, Delaware State Board of Education

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Leroy Travers, Director, Charter School Office
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office
- Alicia Balcerak, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office
- Faye Schilling, Education Specialist, Charter School Office
- Carla Jarosz, Deputy Attorney General

Representatives of First Military Academy

- Scott Kidner, Board Chair
- Raymond Ott, Board Member
- Blair Newman, Principal
- Katie Kubota, Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction
- Lynette McDuffie, Financial Specialist
- Kathleen Swierzbinski, Supervisor of Operations and School Programs
- Jennifer Tuppeny, Supervisor of Special Education

Discussion:

After reviewing the the initial report responses provided by First State Military, CSAC identified areas requiring additional information from the school:

1. What was the outcome of the school's conversation with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)?

A - During discussions with USDA, it was established that the USDA was unwilling to alter the loan covenant terms. To fulfill the covenant, the school will continue depositing funds into two escrow accounts.

- How long will it take the school to meet the requirements of the loan covenants?

A – A timeframe nor an amount has not been determined. This will be discussed at the November board meeting. The school will assess the budget to determine a feasible amount and timeframe based on budget constraints.

Follow-Up Questions:

Gregory Fulkerson- Gregory Fulkerson expressed thanks for acknowledging receipt of the school's curriculum documentation follow-up on Friday, November 17th. Ratings for curriculum items are pending.

Ted Molin inquired about the USDA's reaction when asked to change the loan covenants.

A - USDA was not angry, however, they stated that this was something that they have not done before. First State Military plans to work toward securing the necessary funds for compliance.

Kendall Masset appreciated the school's progress over the past year and commended Mr. Newman and his team's efforts.

Conclusion:

Ms. Klein asked if there was a motion to recommend that First State Military Academy 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, 2024, with or without conditions. The motion was made and seconded to recommend approval with the following conditions:

1. First State Military Academy meet standard in all curricular areas as determined Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development by February 1, 2024.
2. First State Military Academy will provide monthly written updates on the progress towards the meeting of loan covenants, until the time that compliance has been met.

Next Steps:

- On or before November 28th, CSAC will issue a final report, which will include its recommendation on the renewal application.
- The public comment period will close on December 7th.
- The Secretary of Education will announce his decision at the December 14th State Board of Education meeting and ask for the assent of the State Board.
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