

CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Kuumba Academy Charter School

Charter Renewal

Initial Report

November 7, 2023

As is required, Kuumba Academy Charter School (Kuumba) 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 were in attendance at the initial meeting of CSAC on October 31, 2023:

Voting Committee Members

- Kim Klein, Associate Secretary, Operations Support
- Aimee Beam, Education Associate, School Support
- Tierra Fair, Community Member
- 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
- Deb Stevens, Delaware State Board of Education

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

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

Representatives of Kuumba Academy Charter School

- Herb Broadwater, Board President
- Sally Maldonado, Head of School
- Varneka Baynard, Upper School Director of Special Education
- Eula Hooten, Lower School Director of Special Education
- Ayanna Johnson, Principal
- Michelle Lambert, Financial Consultant
- Angelina Peterson, Reading Specialist
- **Raye Jones-Avery, Founding Board President (joined via Webex)**

Kuumba was given time to provide an overview of the school.

Since March 2020, Kuumba students and families have been significantly impacted by increased violence, death, job loss, food insecurity, and other social challenges resulting from the pandemic. Ms. Maldonado wished to acknowledge and thank the Department of Education (DOE) for its support assisting Kuumba in responding to the needs of its families and students during that unprecedented time. As a result of the challenges experienced over the last few years, Kuumba has carefully identified its priorities and is prepared to address them in a manner that best supports its students. Over the course of the next charter, the school is prepared to address the academic, social/emotional, and behavioral needs of its students with the goal of increasing student achievement and growth to pre-pandemic levels.

Kuumba's mission is driven by a belief that parents are a child's first educator. The school is committed to creating an inclusive environment that embraces parental involvement and engagement. Through a video presentation ([linked here](#)), Kuumba highlighted its use of Parent Camp to further empower and engage parents as partners in their child's education.

The second video presented ([linked here](#)) highlighted Kuumba's work in Better World Day, which is an expeditionary learning (EL) tradition. Better World Day enables students in EL schools to showcase how they are positively impacting the world around them. For Kuumba's most recent initiative, students focused on healthcare inequities that helped pave the way for the creation of the school's new health center, which was opened in partnership with Christiana Care.

Kuumba Academy serves over 600 students and is committed to the goal of closing the achievement gap through a focus on the whole child, where each student feels a sense of significance, belonging, and joy

Initial CSAC Questions and Feedback:

Enrollment

1. The five- year projected enrollment chart indicates enrollments of 610 for the first four years of the next charter term and 613 for year five (2028-29). The five-year projected enrollment chart will become the school's authorized enrollment for the new charter term. If Kuumba intends for the enrollment to be 610 for each year over the next five years, submit a revised five-year projected enrollment chart to reflect total enrollment of 610. Otherwise, the authorized enrollment will be what is reflected on the original chart. A - The board has made the decision to decrease enrollment recognizing that this will enable the school to serve its students in a more focused and personalized manner. The school re-submitted the enrollment chart to reflect an enrollment 610 each year (appendix A).

Staff / Licensure and Certification / Evaluations

2. Kuumba's 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 the school's experience with completing professional growth and student improvement goals. Have there been any particular challenges in completing either?
A - Kuumba has transitioned from its alternative evaluation system (The Teacher Excellence Framework) to the Delaware Teacher Growth and Support System (DTGSS). All professional and student improvement goals have been completed. The only challenge was related to technology. It is believed that a technical component related to the school's email addresses was the cause of the problem. The school's technology department is working to resolve this. All completed drafts are saved so, once this issue is resolved, the school will be able to submit professional growth and student improvement goals for all staff members.
 - b. Describe Kuumba's plan for completing professional growth and student improvement goals.
A - Since this was the school's first year transitioning to DTGSS, Ms. Johnson has met with each individual teacher to provide support and professional development to assist staff with using Data Service Center (DSC). Professional development will continue throughout the year. Fall conferences have been completed with staff. Staff used a self-reflection tool to assist in the formulation of professional growth and student improvement goals.
 - c. Have the three 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 the schedule or plan for scheduling and completion.
A - The goal for DTGSS observations is to complete each round using two-month windows. The first window in the observation cycle, for which walk throughs and learning walks have already started, is November and December. Round two will be in January and February, followed by round three in March and April. Teachers will also continue to receive professional development in each of the performance areas.
3. Kuumba's summative evaluation completion rate for 2022/2023 shows as 0%. If this is correct, why were summative evaluations not completed?
A - Previously Kuumba used an alternative evaluation system, the Teacher Excellence Framework, however, this year the school transitioned to DTGSS. Those previous evaluations were not entered into DSC; however, they have all been stored in Google Drive and will be uploaded into DSC.
4. According to information in the mentoring center there are four educators in year one of the comprehensive induction program (CIP), eight educators in year two, one educator in year three, and no educators in year four.
 - a. When will year one and two mentees be assigned a mentor for the 2023-2024 school year in the mentoring center?

- A - All mentees have been assigned and mentoring has already started for the year.
- b. 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 started for everyone. All mentees have been assigned and all meetings were held by the third week in September.
- c. Has the year three mentee started mentoring requirements with the lead mentor's guidance? If not, when will they begin?
A - Mentoring has started for everyone. All mentees have been assigned and all meetings were held by the third week in September.
- d. Is Kuumba's mentoring site coordinator attending required meetings to stay informed about the CIP and able to communicate with school leadership?
A - The site coordinator has attended virtual sessions and attended the summer professional development. The site coordinator is also a member of the instructional leadership team (ILT), which meets bi-weekly. The site coordinator provides a report to the ILT during these meetings.
- e. Does Kuumba have enough experienced educators to serve as mentors for the educators in years one and two of the program?
A - There are six team members serving in this role.
5. Has the lead coach conducted any meetings for the induction coaches this year?
a. If so, how many?
A - These meetings took place during August professional development and staff orientation. The next meeting will be January 5th; however, coaches still meet on a bi-weekly basis.
6. Has the building induction team been created?
a. Have meetings begun?
A - The induction team has been created. The first meeting was held on August 23rd and the school has also extended its ILT meetings to include time for the induction team.
- b. How often has the team met this year?
A - The team meets bi-weekly during ILT meetings.
- c. Which building leader is assigned to the team?
A - Vendel Harris is assigned to the team.
7. Does Kuumba have year-long teacher residencies?
a. If so, how many?
A - Kuumba currently has one Delaware State University (DSU) resident. Kuumba has two DSU resident alumni teaching at the school. They joined the staff in 2020.

8. Does Kuumba have a para-educator to teacher program or pipeline?
 - a. If so, have any participants been hired?

A - The school recently partnered with Wilmington University's Grow Your Own program.
9. What is the school's staff to student ratio?

A - The school's current staff to student ratio is 1:7.
10. When was the staff recruitment plan last revisited?

A – The recruitment plan was revisited during the 2022-2023 school year, along with retreats held in October 2022 and February 2023.
11. How many current vacancies does the school have?

A - The school currently has one vacancy in second grade special education. Instruction is currently being covered by the special education director.
12. Submit a full staff listing with each staff member's current assignment and current licensure and certification status (including initial or continuing license).

A – This is attached as appendix B.
13. Submit Kuumba's salary schedule / table.

A - The school does not currently have a salary schedule. Kuumba has provided cost of living increases. Kuumba did receive the one-time supplemental salary increase outlined in the Governor's budget. Equitable pay, professional development, and a supportive school culture leads to teacher retention. The school has created an approved salary range for new hires that was implemented for the 2023-2024 school year.

CSAC Follow-Up for Enrollment and Staff / Licensure and Certification / Evaluations

Tiffany Green – For question two, when were goals completed?

A - This was done throughout October with a few that need to be done in November. Those teachers are on maternity leave or have recently joined the school.

Tiffany Green – Has Kuumba reached out to Angela Socorso about the technical difficulties?

A - The school could not submit materials, because courses are not loading. Once this is resolved, all teachers will be able to submit to their evaluator.

Tiffany Green – Does Kuumba have summative evaluations from last year? As a follow-up, these will need to be uploaded into DSC.

A – They are on Google Drive. Once Kuumba can navigate DSC, they will be uploaded.

Kendall Massett – The minor modification is looking for an enrollment decrease to 610 students. Was the decrease in enrollment due to families having a difficult time with the new registration and enrollment process?

A - The school experienced difficulties, particularly with kindergarten families. Some families saw the process as cumbersome and did not understand why they needed to register at their home district first.

Kendall Massett – Kuumba was using the Teaching for Excellence Framework for evaluations. Was Google Drive approved for the collection of evaluations?

A – Google Drive was approved for the collection of evaluations.

Kendall Massett – What is Kuumba’s teacher retention rate?

A - On average, the teacher retention rate is 86%.

Kendall Massett – Charter Schools are not required to have a salary scale.

Deb Stevens – Are staff members certified in the positions they fill?

A – Approximately 50% of staff members are certified in the positions in which they teach.

Deb Stevens – Are there plans to get the uncertified staff members certified?

A – There is a plan. Those teachers are in alternative routes to certification (ARTC) programs.

Deb Stevens – What is included in Kuumba’s staff recruitment plan?

A - The focus is on salaries for new hires, hard to fill positions, and performance bonuses (which are not yet approved). Kuumba is working with various historically Black colleges and universities to recruit diverse staff. The school feels it has done a good job at identifying potential teachers and encouraging them to enter the field of education. For example, current University of Delaware students that are tutoring at Kuumba and Howard High School interns that are working with students are potential future hires.

Academic Performance and Framework

14. In 2023, 23% of Kuumba students were proficient in English / language arts (ELA) and 14% were proficient in math. What factors contributed to the low proficiency rates?

A - Although significant efforts were made to engage students during the pandemic, learning loss did occur. Consequently, the recovery after the pandemic has been slow, but work is continuing to be done to rebuild. In addition, the school experienced more instances of absenteeism, due to quarantines, which interrupted learning. Extended absences among both teachers and students impacted continuity and, as a result, achievement levels. For example, in eighth grade (a year in which students are tested) 28% of students had 15 or more absences. Currently, the school is happy to report that they are at 93.8% for average daily attendance. Also, during the 2022-2023 school year, Kuumba had seven teachers that were new to the profession and in their first year of teaching. However, with extensive support, mentoring, and professional development, the school anticipates that achievement levels will increase because of the structures put in place to train and develop these new teachers.

a. What is the school doing to increase proficiency rates?

A - First, the school has been very intentional about adding additional support around truancy. For example, classroom and family advocates are utilized to develop plans to

improve attendance. A robo-call system has been implemented to inform and alert parents to patterns of absenteeism. There is also a focus on supporting student health. As a result, 60% of students are enrolled in the wellness center. Academically, the school just finished full implementation of skill blocks in kindergarten through second grade classrooms, which are heavily phonics based. There has been additional instructional support in kindergarten through second grade classrooms for more individualized instruction. In addition, Kuumba invested in a math interventionist, three Reading Assist tutors in ELA, and a full-time instructional coach. All new teachers are provided with experienced and intensive coaching. Paraprofessionals are coached by the school's reading specialist. On-going professional development is provided for other curricular platforms such as Zearn and Columbia University's Change Framework around Eureka Math. A writing rubric, aligned to Smarter Balance standards, was also developed for teachers to use to improve student writing skills.

15. What strategies do you plan to implement to increase proficiency levels for students with disabilities?

A - Educators will be provided with more support during the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) period and within content areas from instructional support professionals in math, science, ELA and social studies. In the work plan, teachers are empowering students to create their own supplemental and differentiated materials, which include anchor charters, flash cards, and study guides. The school is also experiencing the benefits of conducting learning walks with coaches to develop professionally and adjust instructional approaches. The directors are also continuing bi-weekly meetings with the special education department to ensure that they introduce DOE special education regulations, progress monitoring, writing individualized education plans (IEPs), and other best practices.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development

16. Describe, in detail, the enhancements that have been made to the school's MTSS process.

A - The school is moving ahead with using micro-phase trackers that assist with phonics instruction and literacy. The school has MTSS tracking documents and has created guidance documents for teachers to use during MTSS time. To address behavioral concerns, the school has contracted with a behavioral specialist, who also supports data collection and assists in the creation of behavior plans. The team has also attended state MTSS book study for professional development.

- a. How do students move from tier 1 to tier 2 and from tier 2 to tier 3?

A - Progress monitoring data is collected and used for behaviors and academics. If, after six weeks, students are not showing growth or meeting goals, they will then be referred to the student success team. The team will review the data and make necessary recommendations for next steps. Data walls are also used to track each student. Interim assessment data is analyzed during weekly instructional team meetings.

17. What resources and interventions are used to support students in tier 2 and tier 3?
A - Academic resources include Moby Max, which is used for reading and math, in addition to Zearn for math. The reading specialist has created lessons for phonics instruction and Smarter Balance aligned intervention lessons. Eureka math curriculum materials are also used for intervention and support. Social/ emotional programs such as pet therapy, a champions program, and drumline have been added to meet students' emotional behavioral needs. Guidance documents have been created for teachers to maximize MTSS time.
18. How do ELA teachers utilize the data from Moby Max to support tier 1 instruction?
a. What remediation is provided to students who do not meet their goals?
A – this data is used to identify skills and standards mastered or identify where students are struggling. During MTSS time, teachers use the real-time feature, allowing them to see when a student is struggling and enable immediate intervention while students are working. It also includes the ability to monitor the number of standards students are mastering. Moby Max also allows students to celebrate success, which increases their engagement. Moby Max contributes to Smarter Balance performance and IEP goal work. For remediation, once data is reviewed, and a determination and plan are formulated, students have access to interventionists and a reading specialist. In addition, after school tutoring support for students is provided.
19. How are students who are active multilingual or English language learners (ELL) provided appropriate supports to access grade-level content and develop English language proficiency?
a. What does the language instruction model for multilingual learners look like at Kuumba?
A - ELL support comes from a contracted instructor. Using last year's data and fall baseline data, small group instruction is designed, using a pull-out model. Also, teachers are provided with resources and strategies to support their work with these students. Furthermore, the school has participated in multilingual learner professional development to stay current with trends and best practices within multilingual instruction.
20. The school did not meet standard for curriculum in science and health and physical education. Continue to work with the Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development (CIPD) workgroup to address all expectations.
A - Regarding the health and physical education curriculum, all the Kuumba students receive instruction in respecting others personal boundaries, child abuse, consent, and personal safety. This is conducted by the school's counselors. Counselors also implement the Second Step curriculum. Physical education teachers, counselors, and the school nurse collaborate with American Heart Association. The school has a DSU resident for physical education and health and can help in leading instruction. The school will provide a scope and sequence for the Second Step program.

In Science, younger grades experience next generation science standards (NGSS) during literacy labs where students explore, engineer, create, and imagine solving a dilemma. Each module is connected to a science standard from NGSS. Teachers took part in August and September in Amplify and OpenSciEd professional development. Additional professional development will take place in November and December. Kuumba's science coach will continue to attend Science Coalition meeting.

CSAC Follow-up for Academic Performance Framework and Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development.

April McCrae - Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) is a normed referenced assessment. It is suggested that Kuumba reach out to the Assessment workgroup to analyze what tools are being used and if they are helping meet your goals aligned to Smarter Balance.

Kendall Massett - Is there something that Kuumba looks for in teaching staff that is important which you prioritize over certification.

A - The school looks for teachers passionate about urban education, arts education, and meeting the needs of the whole child. Also, the school seeks to hire a teacher willing to learn and who is teachable, culturally competent, and able to form relationship with students and families. For special education, the school seeks teachers, who can demonstrate a lesson with strategies that can close the gap.

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

1. Continue to work with the CIPD workgroup to ensure that all curricular areas meet standard.

Next Steps:

- An initial public hearing will take place on November 9th at 5:00 p.m.
- The applicant will have the opportunity to submit a written response to the CSAC initial report, which is due by close of business November 22nd.
- A second and final meeting of CSAC will be held on November 28th.
- On or before December 5th CSAC will issue its final report including its recommendation on the renewal.