

Delaware Department of Education

2013-14

STATE CHARTER SCHOOL REPORT

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I. LEGAL & POLICY ENVIRONMENT

A. What innovations does Delaware's charter school policy landscape empower our charter schools to implement?

Delaware law enables charters to operate free of many state and school district rules and regulations governing public education. The law also encourages the use of different and innovative or proven school environments and teaching and learning methods. Below is a list of innovative practices highlighted in the 2013-13 Annual Charter School Report:

Academy of Dover – AOD hired a Math Coach for the 2014-15 school year to assist with Math RtI. AOD also has an elementary marching school band for grades 2-5. Finally, AOD was also recognized as 2014 National Blue Ribbon School for Exemplary Closing of the Achievement Gap.

Campus Community School – The school's 21st Century Community Center offers an intensive 6.5 week summer and three day per week after-school enrichment program, "S.T.E.A.M. into learning: Explore, Discover, and Create." CCS also conducts student-led conferences, which allows students to take responsibility for their learning and accept accountability for their actions.

Charter School of Wilmington – CSW has initiated student/faculty exchange programs with high schools in Taiwan, Italy, and Spain as part of its global expansion program introducing its students and faculty to new cultures and teaching methods. Additionally, through grants, donations, and in-kind gifts, CSW has acquired 3D printers, binocular LCD microscopes, a PCR Thermocycler, five spectrophotometers, and a Fluid Dynamics Pump Lab.

Delaware Academy of Public Safety and Security – DAPSS cadets are offered a robust academic program plus exposure to first responder skills and trainings. Key to the culture of all first responder organizations and a core value at DAPSS is "fidelity to others". DAPSS received the following donations to help with its mission: equipment, \$2,500 grant for Airway Manikins, fully-operational working ambulance, 50 sets of Turn Out Gear (firefighter's uniforms), 8 fire extinguishers for training, EMS training textbooks, operating EMS top grade gurney, class set of Operation Fire Helmets, quarterly fire truck access, and miscellaneous EMS training equipment.

EastSide Charter School – ESC has implemented the Teaching Excellence Framework as an alternative instructional evaluation tool to replace DPAS II. ECS's observation and feedback process mirrors the six steps outline in Paul Bambrick-Santoyo's *Leverage Leadership: A Practical Guide to Building Exceptional Schools*.

Family Foundations Academy – FFA has iPads for virtual classrooms in the middle school and honors classes. Additionally, FFA has established Elementary and Junior Honor Societies that go out into the community and volunteer. FFA has also hired a full-time data coach that provides support to both schools.

Gateway Lab School – GLS has implemented an administrative model that utilized a Head of School and Assistant Head of School. Gateway also contracted with the Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL) to conduct a Comprehensive School Review. GLS also applied for and was awarded a literacy grant, which allowed for the purchase of 100 mini iPads, which students utilize along with the extensive Big Universe Library on a daily basis for independent reading. Additionally, GLS instituted the Gladiator Values – honor, loyalty, truth, and courage. The importance of these values was reinforced at engaging and community building weekly assemblies.

Kuumba Academy Charter School – KACS has also partnered with both Red Clay and Brandywine School Districts to training teachers and math coaches in the implementation of Singapore Math Strategies. KACS

has also partnered with the Delaware Math and Science Foundation to advance its implementation of the Singapore Math Curriculum. Additionally, KACS offers new and returning students additional academic support through a seven-week full-day intensive summer enrichment program. Beginning in August 2013, KACS began integrating the nationally-recognized, research-based, innovative Expeditionary Learning (EL) model, which organizes student learning around an experiential project-based approach into its Academic program.

Las Américas ASPIRA Academia – LAAA’s provides students dual language instruction through two separate programs: the Dual Language Immersion Program for students in grades K-1 and the Spanish as a World Language Program for students in upper grades. LAAA also provides students with a project-based learning curriculum, which was developed by the Buck Institute for Education. LAAA targets gifted learnings through its QUEST Program and also has an innovative Performing Arts Department. LAAA has secured the resources to implement a 1:1 iPad program in grades 1-5.

Middletown Odessa Townsend Charter School – In addition to typical formal student organizations such as Student Government and National Junior Honor Society, MOT students are invited to participate in ad hoc committees around a variety of school community issues, such as menu selection, conflict resolution, curriculum review and policy review. More formal student leadership opportunities include: student reading buddies, intramural sports coaching, and Student Ambassadors. At the end of each year, 7th and 8th grade students at MOT join together to participate in a comprehensive two-week project that culminates in a presentation to the 7th and 8th grade student body and teachers.

Newark Charter School – NCS utilizes a Core Knowledge curriculum scope and sequence, which was developed by Dr. E.D. Hirsch and the Core Knowledge Foundation. NCS was designated as a Core Knowledge Visitation School and was cited as one of the best eight Core Knowledge schools in the United States. NCS was the first school to implement, in 2005, the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program. NCS is also a recipient of the Delaware Department of Education’s Parent Partnership Award.

Odyssey Charter School – OCS offers an innovative approach to education by providing its students with instruction in a second language, Greek. The Greek language provides an additional focus on the classic roots and fundamentals of English, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Odyssey also offers Academic Accelerated Enrichment (ACE) programming to students in grades 3-6. Odyssey also encourages positive and compassionate school relationships through a school-wide Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program.

Positive Outcomes Charter School – With the integration of the Big Picture model into the POCS curriculum, POCS staff is committed to igniting the passions of the students through discovery and development of each student’s unique interests. POCS students feel empowered and have the self-confidence to create their own success through a personalized learning environment and purposeful internships of their choice. POCS first began developing its School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) system during the Spring of 2004 and, since partnering with Devereux Center for Effective Schools (CES) in the Winter of 2011, has significantly revamped and improved the system.

Prestige Academy Charter School – PACS offers new and returning scholars additional academic support through a two-week, four hour intensive summer remediation program. Concurrently, a summer program through Affinity Health provides scholars with social and emotional support through workshops, small group lessons, role plays, and educational field trips. PACS also offers a Saturday on the first and third Saturday of every month between the months of October and December to provide remedial math and ELA instruction for scholars identified as RtI Tier III. Also, weekly from February to May, PACS offers the Most Wanted Targeted Tutoring program to use student performance data from spring DCAS round 1 to plan small group remediation or enrichment. PACS has also engaged an Instructional Coach to assist with

the development of school leadership and teachers through classroom observation, professional development and leadership coaching. PACS has also implemented an RtI system, which it calls its “Power Hour.”

Providence Creek Academy – PCA builds strong communities through its annual Service Learning projects. All PCA students participate throughout the year by adopting an organization or project to give back to their community. PCA also offers students Arts and Athletics, in conjunction with Academics.

Sussex Academy – Sussex Academy began a relationship with the Rehoboth Beach Film Society, the Rehoboth Beach Art League, and Lead Your Way Solutions to bring more authentic arts experiences to its students. Sussex Academy’s high school teachers began the incorporation of International Baccalaureate protocols in their instruction and assessments at grade 9. Also, the Sussex Academy Foundation finished off six new classrooms, locker rooms and a student lounge. Sussex Academy also began assembling our new Technology Education program to be implemented in the 2014-15 school year. Since the school’s instructional focus is literacy – reading, writing, speaking, and listening - all students have a minimum of ninety minutes per day in reading and writing and are required to maintain a portfolio, to be presented to their parents, that contains artifacts and reflections about their learning during the school year.

Thomas A. Edison Charter School – Thomas A. Edison Charter School was the 2011 State Academic Achievement Award winner and has implemented a number of rigorous and challenging programs including Franklin Covey’s 7- Habits leadership training for all students, Pre-AP Math and English in its middle grades, University of Chicago’s STEP (Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress) Reading Assessment, Achieve 3000 (a web-based differentiated instructional reading program for struggling and gifted learners), First Move Chess program in grades 2-3, Algebra in the early and middle grades, and its 100-Book Challenge Reading Program, school-wide. Our chess program is one of the top programs in the state and nation, as our students have won the Delaware State Chess Championship, The Baltimore Open, Maryland All-Girls Championship, and the UMBC Championship, and finished in first place at the National Chess Championship in Dallas, Texas in 2014, as runner-up at the National Chess Championship in San Diego, in 2012, and in 3rd place at the Nationals in Nashville, in 2013.

B. How are Delaware’s charter schools driving and implementing innovative practices in non-charter public schools across the state?

The following information was supplied by charter school leaders:

“Opportunities exist for collaboration with regular public schools through statewide curriculum/instruction professional development, state board presentation, and program specific activities. Barriers present themselves when legislation or regulations are enacted that require a ‘one size fits all.’”

“The opportunities and barriers lie within the attitudes between educators. This may seem like a simple answer, but I believe it is the hardest barrier to overcome. In order for there to be true collaboration, educators need to put their own personal and professional agendas aside. They need to approach conversations like allies, as opposed to enemies. Sharing ideas of innovation in writing is not effective. It requires a two-way conversation in order to effectively exchange information. Many educators and other stakeholders have taken this approach with fellow educators in other states and countries, yet have not taken similar steps with their colleagues within our own state. I believe each of us needs to decide whether to be part of the problem or

part of the solution. I hope to be part of the solution and I am taking the necessary steps to start those conversations myself.”

C. How do per-student costs at charter schools compare to those of other public schools?

Although 14 Del. § 514 requires this report to share information comparing the per student expenditures of charter schools, considering all sources of such expenditures, with those of other public schools, the DOE will not have the necessary data to make this calculate and make this comparison until mid-April, well after the February 1 publication deadline.

II. VISION FOR THE FUTURE

A. What are our goals as an authorizer?

The DOE is committed to meeting the highest professional standards for charter school authorizers, with the ultimate goal of leveraging that work to ensure that all charter schools in Delaware are high-performing charter schools. To make that happen, we will need to hold all charter schools to the high standards we have articulated in the Performance Framework, and monitor charter school performance against those standards, and consistently hold charter schools accountable for the results our students deserve. It is critical that all of our work be conducted in a clear, transparent, skillful, efficient, and highly professional manner.

B. How does our performance as a charter school authorizer position us to attain our goals?

The [Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing](#), published by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), reflects best practices and high professional standards drawn from charter school authorizers of all types from across the country. According to NACSA, "These guidelines have been written into numerous state laws, have informed federal legislation, and have served as the basis for the evaluation of authorizer practices. When embraced by authorizers and policymakers, they help to create an environment in which authorizers can better do their jobs to foster, and grow great charter schools."

The DOE is committed to becoming a model charter school authorizer, and doing so by holding itself to the Principles & Standards articulated by NACSA. With this in mind, we are using the occasion of our State Charter School Report to reflect on our performance as an authorizer against their standards, identifying areas of strength and potential opportunities for further growth. The table below summarizes our conclusions:

Standard 1: Agency Commitment and Capacity

Areas of Strength

Potential Opportunities for Further Growth

- Supports and advances the purposes of charter school law.
- Ensures that the authorizer’s leadership, and staff understand and are committed to the three core principles of high-quality charter school authorizing.
 - Enlists expertise and competent leadership for all areas essential to charter school oversight through staff, contractual relationships, and/or intra- or inter-agency collaborations.
 - Implement policies, processes, and practices that streamline and systematize its work toward stated goals.
- Articulate and implement an intentional strategic vision and plan for chartering, including clear priorities, goals, and time frames for achievement.
- Continue strengthening the capacity and expertise level of the DOE staff.
- Evaluate work regularly against national standards for quality authorizing and recognized effective practices, and develops and implements timely plans for improvement when it falls short.

Standard 2: Application Process and Decision Making

Areas of Strength

- Welcomes proposals from first-time charter applicants as well as existing school operators/replicators, while requiring appropriate information from each one.
- Continue to improve the clarity and transparency of the application decision-making process.
- Implements a charter application process that is open, well publicized, and transparent, and is organized around clear, realistic timelines.
- Requires all applicants to present a clear and compelling mission, a quality educational program, a solid business plan, effective governance and management structures and systems, founding team members demonstrating diverse and necessary capabilities, and clear evidence of the applicant's capacity to execute its plan successfully.
- Establishes distinct requirements and criteria for applicants proposing to contract with education service or management providers.
- Rigorously evaluates each application through thorough review of the written proposal and other due diligence to examine the applicant's experience and capacity, conducted by knowledgeable and competent evaluators.

Potential Opportunities for Further Growth

- Make application available at least 3 months the application acceptance window officially opens, to provide prospective applicants with more time to complete and submit high-quality applications.
- Broadly invites and solicits charter applications while publicizing the authorizer's strategic vision and chartering priorities, without restricting or refusing to review applications that propose to fulfill other goals.

Standard 3: Performance Contracting

Areas of Strength

- Allows—and requires contract amendments for—occasional material changes to a school's plans, but does not require amending the contract for non-material modifications.
- Defined clear, measurable, and attainable academic, financial, and organizational performance standards and targets that the school must meet as a condition of renewal, including but not limited to, state and federal measures.

Potential Opportunities for Further Growth

- Complete development and implementation of charter contracts that clearly:
 - State the roles and responsibilities of the school and the authorizer;
 - State and respect the autonomies to which schools are entitled—based on statute, waiver, or authorizer policy—including those relating to the school's authority over educational programming, staffing, budgeting, and scheduling.

Standard 4: Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation

Areas of Strength

- Requires and reviews annual financial audits of schools, conducted by a qualified independent auditor.
- Provides clear technical guidance to schools as needed to ensure timely compliance with applicable rules and regulations.
- Provides an annual written report to each school, summarizing its performance and compliance to date and identifying areas of strength and areas needing improvement.
- Respects the school's authority over its day-to-day operations.
- Refrains from directing or participating in educational decisions or choices that are appropriately within a school's purview under the charter law or contract.
- Through the Organizational Framework Guidance Document, provides clear guidelines around how ratings will be developed and how compliance data will be evaluated throughout the charter term.

Potential Opportunities for Further Growth

- Establishing and makes known to schools at the outset an intervention policy that states the general conditions that may trigger intervention and the types of actions and consequences that may ensue.

Standard 5: Revocation and Renewal Decision-Making

Areas of Strength

- Bases the renewal process and renewal decisions on thorough analyses of a comprehensive body of objective evidence defined by the performance framework in the charter contract.
- Grants renewal only to schools that have achieved the standards and targets stated in the charter contract, are organizationally and fiscally viable, and have been faithful to the terms of the contract and applicable law.
- Provides to each school, in advance of the renewal decision, a cumulative performance report that:
 - Summarizes the school's performance record over the charter term, and
 - States the authorizer's summative findings concerning the school's performance and its prospects for renewal.

Potential Opportunities for Further Growth

- Further strengthen protocols for pre-renewal meetings with charter schools

C. What future policy goals are we exploring to enable us to excel in our charter school authorizing work and drive high performance across Delaware's charter school sector?

The following identifies some of our future policy goals:

- An expedited new charter school application process for highly successful charter school operators.
- Alignment of new charter school application criteria to identified geographic and programmatic needs in the state.