



Major Modification Request – Enrollment Change & Enrollment Preferences

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Section A Core Questions:

- 1. What modification does the school’s Board of Directors want to make to the term(s) of the charter? Identify the page number(s) on which the term(s) is/are stated in the currently approved charter. If the term(s) of the charter the school wants to modify is/are conditions placed on the charter by the Secretary of Education and members of the State Board of Education, state the condition(s) and the date(s) on which the condition(s) was/were placed on the school’s charter.**

Freire Charter School Wilmington is requesting two major modifications – an initial decrease in student enrollment and a change in our enrollment preferences.

Student Enrollment: On page 3-35 of our initial charter application, we stated that, “Freire Wilmington anticipates serving students in grades 8 to 12, with 112 students per grade level. For the 2015-2016 school year, Freire will start with grades 8, 9, and 10 and then add a grade each year. After adding grade 12 in 2017-2018, Freire will be at its maximum enrollment of 560 students.” After conducting our initial admissions outreach, we have come to the conclusion that it is premature to include 10th grade in our first year of operation. Thus, we are now requesting that Freire will start with grades 8 and 9 in year 1 (2015-16), with a total of 224 students. This pushes back the ramp-up of our program by one year, so that we are fully operational with 560 students in grades 8 to 12 by 2018-19. The enrollment we are requesting is as follows:

	2015-16	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
8 th Grade	112	112	112	112
9 th Grade	112	112	112	112
10 th Grade		112	112	112
11 th Grade			112	112
12 th Grade				112
Total Students	224	336	448	560

Enrollment Preferences: On page 1-2 of our initial charter application, we stated that Freire Charter School Wilmington will give admissions preferences to, “Students who have a specific interest in Freire’s methods, philosophy, and educational focus.” In order to qualify for that preference, “Students and families may choose to sign a pledge, supplemental to the general charter application, indicating their specific interest in Freire Charter School Wilmington’s mission.” While this preference is compliant with 14 Del. C. § 506 (b), it is not in compliance with the regulations of the federal Charter Schools Program in which Freire Charter School Wilmington is a grant participant. As such, we are seeking to remove this preference from our admissions policy.

- 2. What is the effective date of the proposed modification?**

We are requesting an immediate modification to our charter, allowing these changes to be implemented for the 2015-2016 school year.

- 3. The authorizer will review your most recent Performance Review Reports as part of your application. Discuss the school's academic performance, compliance with the terms of its charter, and financial viability as measured by the Performance Framework.**

Not applicable. Freire Charter School Wilmington is not yet operational, and, as such, has not had a Performance Review Report.

- 4. Describe the rationale for the request(s). Discuss any relevant research base or evidence that supports this type of request. (*Attachments may be provided*)**

The rationale for our enrollment decrease modification request is based on actual demand for Freire Charter School Wilmington as judged by our initial admissions outreach activities. We have found that demand for entering 10th grade students is lower than anticipated (less than 10% of all applications received for the school). We attribute this lower application rate among rising 10th graders to the fact that current high school students are entrenched in their current high school settings and, thus, do not desire transferring to a new, unknown school. The founders of the school believe that accepting our students for the 8th grade and 9th grade high school entrance grade and growing these student populations in our upperclassmen is a more natural enrollment outreach plan and one that will yield improved academic and cultural results.

The rationale for removing our one enrollment preference is to become compliant with the enrollment preference regulations under the federal Charter Schools Program from which Freire Charter School Wilmington is receiving \$687,000 in planning and implementation funding.

- 5. Describe how the proposed modification will impact the operation of the school. Include how student achievement, staffing, facilities, and financial viability of the school may be impacted in the current school year and for the remainder of the school's charter term.**

Care has been taken to ensure that our enrollment modification request will not negatively impact the operation of the school, specifically in the area of student achievement. To ensure student achievement will not be impacted negatively, our staffing model continues to staff teachers at the rate of 6 teachers per 100 students and retains average class size at 28 students per class. In fact, by enrolling new students only in the 8th and 9th grade, we are likely improving student achievement by tackling student deficits at an earlier time and ensuring that students will have more time at Freire before graduation.

To account for our smaller student population and the consequent decreased revenue, all cuts in staffing have been done at the administrative level (e.g. no Head of Academics until year 4). As with many start-up charter schools, administrators at Freire Charter School Wilmington will need to wear multiple hats in the start-up years. For example, the Head of School will initially also serve as the Head of Academics (i.e. principal). To account for this leaner administrative structure, the school's charter management organization will be prepared to provide more support to the school during its start-up as

needed.

Our facilities plan has changed since the submission of our charter application. Whereas our application had planned for us to occupy the 920 North French Street property in Wilmington, we have since negotiated a new lease for 201 W. 14th Street and are leasing the space directly from the landlord. To account for our anticipated smaller student population in year 1, we are currently renegotiating our lease with our landlord. Where we previously required 30,000 square-feet of space in year 1, the financial model will only allow for 20,000 square-feet initially. As such, the school will not be able to inhabit the cafeteria until year 2, requiring students to eat in their classrooms for the first year. We are hopeful that we will be able to negotiate a modest ramp-up to the school facility in Years 2 and beyond, but we have budgeted conservatively assuming that we would have to occupy all 50,000 square-feet beginning in year 2.

The budget documents appended to this modification request show a positive net income in each year, despite our decreased revenue. Essentially, we are simply pushing back our budget projections by one year, taking us until year 4 to be fully operational, as opposed to our previously stated year 3.

Our requested modification change to our enrollment preferences will not have any anticipated changes to our school's operations.

6. Indicate the projected impact, if any, of the proposed modification on the school's present financial position, and its financial position going forward. If the modification promises to create financial challenges, indicate how those will be remedied.

As stated above, we are essentially simply pushing back our budget projections by one year, taking us until year 4 to be fully operational, as opposed to our previously stated year 3. Because we have responded to this slower student ramp-up with a leaner, but still sufficient administrative structure, we are actually able to show the positive net income in all years. We do not anticipate at this time that this modification request will create any financial challenges.

Our requested modification change to our enrollment preferences will not have any anticipated changes to our school's financial viability.

Section B Questions:

- 1. Describe the nature and extent of the proposed changes to the school’s current grade configuration, if applicable. Indicate whether you seek to add or cease offering a grade or grades, substantially increase or decrease current enrollment practices and/or projections for future enrollment, etc. (Please make sure to indicate whether you seek an increase or reduction of enrollment of between 5 and 15% or more than 15% of the currently approved total enrollment and note that modification requests that fall into those ranges must be received by the Department of Education’s Charter School Office between November 1 and December 31.)**

We are requesting a reduction in initial enrollment of more than 15%, constituting a major modification.

Our request is to introduce more slowly the upperclassmen grades, by serving only grades 8 to 9 in year 1, as opposed to our originally requested grades 8 to 10. We are not seeking to cease offering a grade, but, instead, to postpone offering a grade by one grade per year until we are fully operational in year 4. The chart below illustrates our enrollment projections per grade under the modification request as compared to our original charter.

	2015-16		2016-2017		2017-2018		2018-2019	
	Original	Mod.	Original	Mod.	Original	Mod.	Original	Mod.
8 th Grade	112	112	112	112	112	112	112	112
9 th Grade	112	112	112	112	112	112	112	112
10 th Grade	112		112	112	112	112	112	112
11 th Grade			112		112	112	112	112
12 th Grade					112		112	112
Total Students	336	224	448	336	560	448	560	560

- 2. If your proposed modification involves an expansion of greater than 15% of your currently approved enrollment and the change will be effective within 18 months of the date of this application, identify the impacts of this expansion on the surrounding school districts and community for consideration.**

Not applicable.

- 3. Describe the projected impact of the enrollment modification on the school’s program, mission, culture and offerings (both academic and non-academic).**

Our request constitutes a slower phasing in of the Freire Charter School Wilmington program, not a deviation from our program in any substantive way. Our mission and academic offerings will be safeguarded by our Head of School and our instructional staff funded at the same rate as in our original charter. Our culture will be led by our Head of Academic Supports, an administrative position that was strategically retained in our

leaner administrative model. Our enrollment modification will have a temporary impact on our extracurricular programming, in that there will be no out-of-school programming beyond academic support for the first two years of operation, as there is no funding for coaching or club leader stipends. However, to the extent that we can fundraise or receive grant funding to support this, we will introduce athletics and enrichment programming sooner.

Section G Questions:

- 1. Describe the reasons why the current enrollment preference practices are problematic and require revision.**

On page 1-2 of our initial charter application, we stated that Freire Charter School Wilmington will give admissions preferences to, “Students who have a specific interest in Freire’s methods, philosophy, and educational focus.” In order to qualify for that preference, “Students and families may choose to sign a pledge, supplemental to the general charter application, indicating their specific interest in Freire Charter School Wilmington’s mission.” While this preference is compliant with 14 Del. C. § 506 (b), it is not in compliance with the regulations of the federal Charter Schools Program in which Freire Charter School Wilmington is a grant participant. As such, we are seeking to remove this preference from our admissions policy.

- 2. Discuss how the modification will solve the current problems and ultimately benefit the school.**

By eliminating this preference, Freire Charter School Wilmington will be in compliance with the federal Charter Schools Program and will have a school that is ultimately more inclusive in its admissions practices and better aligned to our intent to serve all students. This modification will also benefit the school by making us eligible for \$687,000 in planning and implementation funding that will help greatly offset start-up costs.

- 3. Identify any changes to the school’s program that will likely result from the modified preference practices.**

The preference that we are seeking to eliminate was simply a pledge to uphold our mission to which virtually every applicant could agree and qualify. So, we do not anticipate any changes to the school’s program resulting from the modified preference practices.