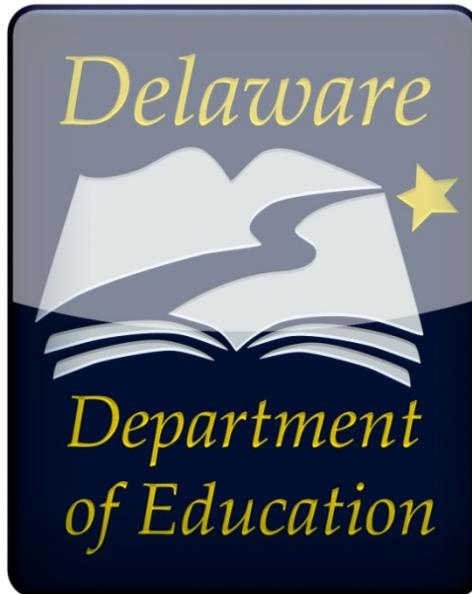


# CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**ACADEMY OF DOVER CHARTER SCHOOL  
INITIAL/PRELIMINARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
APPLICATION TO MODIFY AN EXISTING CHARTER**

Opening Date: September 2003

Grades: K - 4

Location: Kent County

September 30, 2012 Unit Count: 282

Date of Report: 10 April 2013

## Background

**Name** Academy of Dover Charter School

**Current Enrollment** 282

**Projected Enrollment** The modification request is to add a fifth grade, serving K-5 beginning in the 2013-14 school year, and maintain the school's authorized enrollment at 300. The proposed distribution of students per grade is:

Kindergarten	68
Grade 1	66
Grade 2	53
Grade 3	53
Grade 4	40
Grade 5	20

**Mission** The mission of Academy of Dover Charter School is to open portals of opportunity for children and adults in the community through excellence in public education.

**Vision** The Academy of Dover Charter School will serve as a community pillar for life-long learning, pride, and self-actualization. Looking to the past to prepare students for the future, the Academy of Dover Charter School will combine the beneficial rigors of a classical education with the latest technology and the best teaching and learning practices worldwide. The Academy of Dover Charter School student will cultivate and promote multi-cultural and global awareness. Students will be prepared and encouraged to be entrepreneurs, well informed, and responsible world citizens with purpose, passion, and proficiency.

Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee (Committee) met with representatives of the Academy of Dover (AOD) on 11 March 2013 for the Initial/Preliminary Meeting.

### Initial Meeting Discussion

The Committee reviewed six of the fourteen approval criteria but the Initial Meeting discussion focused on two criteria: Educational Program (6) and Economic Viability (8). The following is a summary of the discussion.

- **Educational Program.** The school's curriculum submission was incomplete and not sufficiently timely to allow a review by the Curriculum Work Group before the combined Initial and Preliminary Meetings.
- **Science Coalition Trainings.** The Committee wanted to know who is responsible for making certain that the teachers receive the training. Mr. Rodriguez indicated that the Curriculum Director is responsible.

- **Professional Development Plan.** The Committee wanted clarification about the professional development plan. Mr. Rodriguez indicated that there was a plan; however, its implementation depends upon available funding. Mathematics has been the primary focus during the past year.
- **Economic Viability.** The Committee expressed concern about student retention. Based on the modification application, the projected enrollment would decrease from 66 in first grade to 53 in both second and third grade. The projected enrollment for fourth grade would be 40 with a projection of 20 in the fifth grade. This does not indicate strong demand to support the addition of a fifth grade.

The school noted that the elementary schools in the Capital School District, in which Academy of Dover is located, have an elementary configuration that ends with the fifth grade. Therefore, AOD students must leave at the end of fourth grade, currently the highest grade at the school and attend an elementary school for one year only, the fifth grade, before moving onto a middle school. The school argued that adding a fifth grade would eliminate the transition to an elementary school for fifth grade only. This is not accurate. All of the elementary schools in Capital School District (Booker T. Washington, East Dover, Fairview, Hartley, North Dover, South Dover, and Towne Point) have PreK-4 or K-4 grade configurations.

Currently, eighty-four percent (84%) of students enrolled at AOD reside in the Capital School District. Unless most of AOD's rising fifth grade students typically choose to Caesar Rodney School District it is not clear how students are uniquely impacted, as the school has indicated, since surrounding schools in Capital School District have the same grade configurations as AOD. Elementary schools in neighboring Caesar Rodney School District have K-5 grade configurations but only ten percent (10%) of AOD students reside in the Caesar Rodney School District.

Committee members asked why the school did not consider an increase to the school's authorized enrollment beyond 300 students. Mr. Rodriguez responded that two years ago, the school had requested a decrease to its currently approved enrollment of 300 students and that the school building can accommodate up to 350 students. He also indicated that this modification would help determine future expansion.

The Committee noted that the budget worksheets were not included in the modification application and that technical assistance would be available if needed.

## **Preliminary Meeting Discussion**

With the nature of the modification request, the Committee determined that the following approval criteria listed in 14 Del. C. §512 apply to this application: Mission, Goals, Educational Objectives (3), Goals for Student Performance (4), Evaluating Student Performance (5), Educational Program (6), Students with Special Needs (7), and Economic Viability (8).

### **Criterion Three: Mission, Goals, Educational Objectives**

The school's mission statement is well articulated, convincing, and coherent. In addition, the mission reflects a strong commitment to high expectations and clearly serves the students of the school in measurable ways. However, the modification application did not include clearly defined and measurable goals and objectives for grade five that align to the school's mission.

The modification application also addresses the issue of exiting fourth grade students having to attend grade five at another school that would have a different curriculum and instructional practices. Also, the school cited parent requests to add a fifth grade.

***Criterion Three was not met.***

### **Criterion Four: Goals for Student Performance**

The Committee noted that the Applicant did not include student performance goals. The school indicated that as a charter school, the goals for student performance are dictated and that the charter was recently renewed; thus, there was no need to include the goals that were in the charter renewal application submitted last year. However, the approved charter renewal did not include fifth grade.

The Committee stated that fifth grade target goals for the school's unique student population would have been very helpful and that having these goals would allow the school to identify growth in student performance between the fourth and the fifth grades.

***Criterion Four was not met.***

### **Criterion Five: Evaluating Student Performance**

The Committee noted that no information was presented in the modification application relative to this criterion.

The Committee also stated that the new Charter School Performance Framework would be an important component in reviewing the school's academic performance relative to State benchmarks as well as identifying steps to assure student attainment of the benchmarks. The school's academic performance is clearly important to the Board.

***Criterion Five was not met.***

### **Criterion Six: Educational Program**

The Committee noted the following for the Scope and Sequence, curriculum basis, and memoranda of understanding relative to Criterion Six (sub-criteria a, b, c).

### **Mathematics**

- The school has prioritized the amount of time spent on certain domains, clusters, and standards as set forth in the CCSS (Common Core State Standards). The majority of the instructional time is spent on number and fraction concepts.
- Essential questions are included and are appropriate for the content being taught.
- Formative assessments are included that should be able to gauge student learning.
- The school intends to utilize Go Math as an instructional resource.

### **English Language Arts**

- Scope and sequence documents were submitted that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

### **Science**

- The school is a Science Coalition member. The reviewer requested the name and contact information for the staff member who will coordinate professional development and training for school personnel.

### **Social Studies**

- The school is a Social Studies Coalition member. The reviewer requested a written assurance that the school intends to use the Delaware Recommended Curriculum.

### **Health**

- The application did not contain a submission for this section.

### **Physical Education**

- The application did not contain a submission for this section.

### **World Languages**

- The application did not contain a submission for this section.

### **Visual and Performing Arts**

- The application did not contain a submission for this section.

### **Technology**

- For over a year, the Academy of Dover has been non-compliant with Federal eRATE requirements, Internet Safety Policy, and Internet Safety Curriculum.

For the following applicable sub-criteria in the Educational Plan, no responses were submitted in the modification application request.

- Plans for at-risk students (d)
- Student-teacher ratio (f)
- Unique features of the school (g)
- High quality professional development (h)
- Three units of instruction (i)
- Curricular resource adoptions (j)
- Alignment of curriculum to instruction (k)
- School calendar, master instructional schedule (n).

***Criterion Six was not met.***

### Criterion Seven: Students with Special Needs

The Academy of Dover’s approved renewal application included plans for serving students with special needs in grades K-4. However, the school’s modification application does not describe how the school will be in full compliance with current Federal and State statutes relating to the education of students with disabilities, including the employment of certified special education teachers to teach fifth grade students with disabilities, or how the school will provide for a continuum of educational placements for students with disabilities.

**Criterion Seven was not met.** (Please note that the Committee incorrectly concluded that this criterion was met at the Initial/Preliminary meeting.)

### Criterion Eight: Economic Viability

Revenue and expenditure worksheets were not included with the school’s modification application. The application does reference that the expansion to fifth grade at the Academy of Dover would “offer financial stability to the school,” but provides no additional details.

Without any additional information, it is impossible to determine if the Academy of Dover has a reasonable plan for how to ensure financial viability based on the proposed modification application.

**Criterion Eight was not met.**

### Summary and Recommendations

Criterion	Charter School Accountability Committee’s Recommendations
(3) Mission, Goals, Educational Objectives	<b>Not Met</b>
(4) Goals for Student Performance	<b>Not Met</b>
(5) Evaluating Student Performance	<b>Not Met</b>
(6) Educational Program	<b>Not Met</b>
(7) Students with Special Needs	<b>Not Met</b>
(8) Economic Viability	<b>Not Met</b>

The Charter School Accountability Committee recommended that the modification application from the Academy of Dover Charter School **not** be approved.

## **Appendix A**

### **List of Attendees**

#### **Initial/Preliminary Meeting of the Charter School Accountability Committee**

**11 March 2013**

#### **Modification Application from the Academy of Dover Charter School**

##### **Members of the Committee**

- Mary Kate McLaughlin, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Chief of Staff, Delaware Department of Education
- Debora Hansen, Education Associate, Visual and Performing Arts, Charter Curriculum Review
- Paul Harrell, Director of Public and Private Partnerships
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM
- Karen Field Rogers, Manager, Financial Reform & Resource Management
- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter Schools Network (Non-voting)
- Donna R. Johnson, Executive Director, State Board of Education (Non-voting)

##### **Staff to the Committee**

- Catherine T. Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee
- John Carwell, Director, Charter School Office
- Patricia Bigelow, Education Associate, Charter School Office
- Chantel Janiszewski, Education Associate, Charter School Office

##### **Representatives from the Academy of Dover Charter School**

- Kimeu W. Boynton, Board President
- Noël Rodriguez, Principal
- Cheri Marshall, Curriculum Director