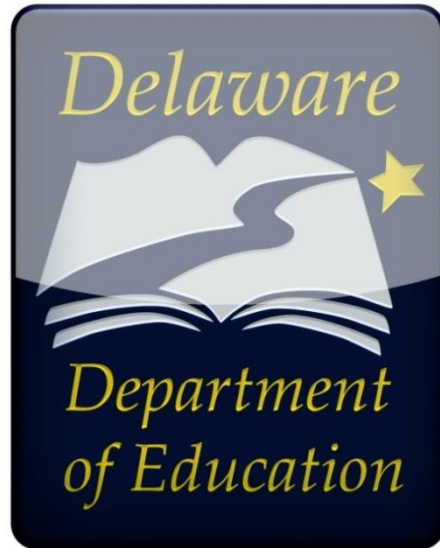


# CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## Campus Community School

**RENEWAL APPLICATION  
INITIAL REPORT**

CSAC Initial Meeting: October 13, 2015  
CSAC Initial Report Published: October 16, 2015

By September 30, 2014, Campus Community School submitted an application to renew its charter. Consideration of this application is in accordance with the applicable provisions of 14 *Del. C.* § 514A and 14 DE Admin. Code § 275. Written renewal application guidance is provided by the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) on its website. The renewal application template developed by DDOE is aligned to measures and targets within the Performance Framework, which outlines the academic, organizational and fiscal standards by which all Delaware charter schools are evaluated. The evaluation of the school's performance as measured by the Framework is a major component of the decision on the renewal application. The decision on the renewal application is based on a comprehensive review, guided, in part, by the following three questions:

1. Is the academic program a success?
2. Is the school financially viable?
3. Is the school organizationally sound?

This report serves as a summary of the strengths, areas of follow-up, and/or concerns identified by members of the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) during their individual reviews of the charter applicant's renewal application, Performance Review Reports, Annual Reports and Performance Agreements and during the CSAC meetings.

The following were in attendance at the Initial Meeting of the CSAC on October 13, 2015:

**Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee**

- David Blowman, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Deputy Secretary, DDOE
- Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary for Adult Education and School Supports, DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE

**Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)**

- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee
- Jennifer Nagourney, Executive Director, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Michelle Whalen, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE

**Ex-Officio Members (Non-voting)**

- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter School Network
- Donna Johnson, Executive Director, Delaware State Board of Education

**Representatives of Charter School**

- Catherine Balsley, Head of School
- Leroy Travers, Principal
- Heidi Greene, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Carolin Lyon, Business Manager

## Discussion

### Section 1: Overview

Dr. Balsley stated that Campus Community School (CCS), in its 15-year journey, has been unrelenting in its commitment to provide all children with a quality education. In school's initial years, with financial and faculty support from Wesley College, CCS served students in grades 1-8. Subsequently, a high school was added on Pear Street. Over the years, the school encountered some challenges. During the current charter term, CCS reorganized – closing the high school, changing the administration, adding kindergarten and downsizing from two campuses to the Pear Street campus.

Dr. Balsley stated that CCS resides within a community of blight, drug abuse, poverty, violence and crime. It is located in front of railroad tracks and beside the Dover Sanitation truck facility. Many students face incredible hurdles. The student body is represented by 72% racial and ethnic minorities and two-thirds receive free and reduced priced lunch. Last year, more than 100 students took home weekend meals provided by the school's backpack program. Dr. Balsley commented that students and staff remain resilient despite numerous challenges. She added that students have received numerous academic awards and have provided countless hours of community service.

Dr. Balsley stated that CCS has met the terms of its Performance Agreement with the DDOE, having met standard on the Academic, Organizational and Financial Frameworks for 2013-14 and continued success is expected to be reflected in the 2014-15 reports when they are released. Dr. Balsley added that academic performance has improved significantly in the current charter term. 2014-15 Smarter Balanced assessment results show that CCS matched the State average in math and was 10% above the State average in English Language Arts (ELA) and 15% above the Capital School District.

### Section 2: Academic Framework

Ms. McCrae commended the school for its 2015-16 Smarter Balanced results and asked the school to describe its strategies to improve academic performance for African American and low income students. Dr. Balsley noted that she joined CCS in January 2014 and Mr. Travers joined CCS in September 2014. Dr. Balsley added that she succeeded Chuck Taylor, who served as the Interim Head of School. When she arrived, she initiated an extensive review of the school and hired external consultants to assist the school in areas where it lacked expertise. Based on the review, an agenda was developed to address the most significant areas of need and the Board and administrative team worked collaboratively to develop a plan. Dr. Balsley stated that prior to this effort, the school did not have a data-driven culture. The Board and administrative team began to look at root causes and identify strategies based on a deep analysis of the data. As a result of this paradigm shift, student achievement began to improve, but the data showed that improvement was not realized as quickly for African American and low income students. Dr. Balsley explained that new strategies were adopted based on best practices.

Ms. Greene explained that the school's data analysis was not limited to struggling students, but all students – “strugglers” and high achievers. She added that it is important to drill down to each student's individual needs. Specifically, for students in grades 4-8, within the RTI structure, students received targeted intervention 30 minutes per day. Two years ago, this time was increased to one hour per day and students received small group tutoring sessions in ELA and math. Additionally, this time was differentiated to serve not only struggling students but provide enrichment (e.g. mentoring, robotics, sign language, Yearbook, etc.). In addition, a partnership with Communities in Schools provides afterschool programming which includes increased academic support for struggling students.

Mr. Travers provided an overview of the socio-emotional supports that the school provides to students. Students who are hungry and/or traumatized can have difficulty focusing in school. The backpack program provides food to 100 students on a weekly basis. Mentoring is provided through the school's boys and girls clubs. The girls club serves 40 students in grades 5-8 who are predominantly minority and low-income. The mentoring program recruits community mentors to serve approximately 50 students who are predominantly minority and low-income. Mr. Travers also noted that the school's Odyssey of the Mind Program has a high percentage of minority students.

Dr. Balsley referred to Appendix XXII of the charter renewal application, which describes the structural changes that the school has made to address the needs of struggling students – modified school day, increased instructional time, reorganized time for staff (e.g. professional learning communities, planning time, etc.). Differentiated learning, special education and best practices for teaching minority children were key focus areas of professional development. Dr. Balsley stated that a mandatory summer school policy was implemented for students who did not meet performance standards. She also noted that hiring and staff evaluations were key drivers for improvement. Additionally, a math specialist was hired to focus on raising math performance. Additional supports were provided to teachers where needed, but ultimately 13 teachers did not return based on the school's new changes and expectations. A new cadre of teachers – both new and experienced – were hired who are more aligned to the school's mission and better reflect the demographics of the students. Ms. Johnson asked the school to describe the school's current percentage of staff who are new teachers and experienced teachers. Ms. Lyon stated that 33% of current staff are new teachers.

Ms. McCrae noted that the school has struggled in science. In 2013, 2014 and 2015 student proficiency in science in grade 5 was 28%, 24% and 22%, respectively. Student proficiency in science in grade 8 for the last three years was 49%, 46% and 32%, respectively. Ms. McCrae also noted that, while the sample science lesson plan submitted with the renewal application was very aligned to Common Core standards, it was not aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Ms. McCrae commended the school for designating a science teacher to participate in the Next Generation Science Standards training. She noted that this teacher was not the author of the sample lesson and suggested that the school maximize her expertise for lesson planning. McCrae also recommended a tool that is available at [nextgenscience.org](http://nextgenscience.org) called the EQUiP Rubric, which helps with understanding the standards. She noted that the science

documents submitted with the renewal application evidence a misalignment to the Next Generation Science Standards.

Ms. McCrae also noted that the school rubric appears to focus on  $\frac{3}{4}$  grit and  $\frac{1}{4}$  academic performance and asked the school to explain the intent behind it. Ms. Greene stated that the school rubric is the school's framework for report cards. Student report cards are scored in four areas: 1) Persistence; 2) Reflection; 3) Self-Direction; and 4) Concepts and Skills. She also noted that student grades are based on concepts and skills, but the other areas provide a more holistic picture of each student's performance. Dr. Balsley noted that habits of mind are very important at CCS. She also mentioned that Ms. Greene, herself and Board members have attended State Board of Education sponsored NGSS meetings in addition to the science teacher designated to attend the trainings. Ms. Greene noted that the science unit submitted with the application was written in collaboration with DDOE as part of a State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), so the school assumed that it met DDOE requirements. Going forward, she added, the administrative team recognizes that science performance needs to improve and will utilize its Professional Learning Communities (PLC) structure to drill down on science. Ms. McCrae suggested that the school seek technical assistance from Tonyea Mead. She also recommended that the school focus on Tier 2 skills with their English Language Learners (ELL).

Ms. Mazza noted concerns with the report prepared by the special education consultant, Ms. Ebling. She asked the school to describe any interventions relative to students with disabilities based upon data analysis. Dr. Balsley noted that she commissioned the report when she first arrived at CCS. Mr. Travers noted that the report revealed weaknesses in the special education program. He added that prior to the report, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) were not standards-based. Staff were not sufficiently trained to develop strong IEPs. Additionally, small group instruction increased significantly for students with disabilities. Monthly professional development is built into the school calendar and this time is dedicated for teachers to analyze data. Also, teachers meet with Mr. Travers and Ms. Greene on a weekly basis to discuss all Tier 2 and Tier 3 students and students with IEPs. Mr. Travers added that prior to Ms. Ebling's report, special education was part of the school but did not receive focused attention. Since then, special education receives focused attention. Mr. also noted that he meets monthly with special education teachers in addition to the other touch points previously mentioned.

Dr. Balsley referred to Appendix I in the renewal application. In 2013, 31% of CCS students with disabilities were proficient in math compared to the State average of 28%. Also, 40% of CCS students with disabilities were proficient in ELA compared to the State average of 30%. She noted that while the school is working to improve its special education program, students are demonstrating academic achievement. Ms. Mazza stated that Ms. Ebling's report identified a number of systems issues. She asked the school to identify the person responsible for coordinating IEP meetings. Mr. Travers noted that the special education teachers schedule their own meetings with his assistance. Ms. Mazza asked the school to confirm that ELL students and students with disabilities received Tier 2 and Tier 3 services in addition to special education services. Mr. Travers affirmed that students receive Tier 2 and Tier 3 services in addition to ELL and special education services.

Ms. Mazza asked the school to describe strategies to ensure that Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavioral Support Plans are completed properly. Mr. Travers stated that Ms. Ebling's report helped the administration determine that the School Psychologist position was inadequate. Thus, a new School Psychologist was hired with greater expertise. Currently, the weekly Response to Intervention (RtI) meetings are not only academically focused but behaviorally focused, and the new School Psychologist participates in these meetings. Ms. Mazza asked the school if the school utilizes the School Psychologist to conduct Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavioral Support Plans for students not identified for special education services. Mr. Travers stated that the school does utilize the School Psychologist for students without disabilities.

Ms. Mazza referred to Ms. Ebling's report and asked the school to describe its process for tracking suspensions for students with disabilities. Mr. Travers stated that he is not certain what the report referred to, but he noted that the school has not had any violations since he has been at CCS. Ms. Mazza asked the school to describe strategies to build collaboration between regular education staff and special education staff. Mr. Travers noted that prior to the report, special education staff removed students with disabilities to work with them one-on-one or in small groups, but now they push into the classrooms and work with teachers. In addition, special education teachers conduct weekly consultations with regular education teachers. Ms. Mazza asked the school to describe any professional development or collaborative teaming. Mr. Travers stated that the PLCs provide the structure for collaborative teams. Ms. Mazza asked the school to describe the procedures to identify students with disabilities. Mr. Travers stated that the RtI process is used to refer students to the Instructional Support Team (IST).

Ms. Johnson stated that the State Board of Education was very concerned about the school's academic performance during their prior charter renewal process. She commended the school for implementing changes that have led to significant academic improvements. She noted that despite the improvements, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was not met and this was due to a reporting issue that included high school graduation data for students that the school stopped serving many years ago when the charter was modified to serve students in grades K-8. Dr. Balsley stated that she attempted address the AYP issue with DDOE, but the issue was not resolved.

Ms. Johnson also noted that the school decided to move away from multi-age classrooms and asked the school to describe how the change was received by parents. Mr. Travers stated that the administration solicited feedback from teachers and families before the change and their feedback was slightly more in favor of moving away from multi-age classrooms. After a year of implementation, teachers are greatly in favor of the current approach. Aside from one parent who asked about the change, parents appear to be on board with the change. Dr. Balsley added that CCS provides flexible grouping in reading and math. Students performing above grade level are permitted to take higher level courses and participate in multi-grade academic enrichment groups. Mr. Travers noted that the opportunity is still available but it is no longer school wide.

Ms. Johnson asked about the indicator 13 corrective action deadlines - September 30 and October 15. Mr. Travers noted these items will be included as part of the record.

### **Section 3: Organizational Framework**

Ms. Field Rogers noted that the school's enrollment decreased from last year. In particular, the most significant decrease was with students moving from grade 7 to grade 8. She asked the school to describe its strategies to increase retention. Ms. Lyon noted that two years ago some of the attrition could be attributed to parents who thought that their students had to be enrolled in Capital School District to be eligible to enroll at Dover High School's new building. An effort was made to better educate the parents, which has resulted in increased retention. Ms. Lyon also noted that the school's proximity to Dover Air Force Base and the greater transiency rates of military families was another possible cause of attrition. She noted that the school currently has a waiting list for students entering grades 5-7.

Ms. Johnson noted that the school's total number of instructional hours (1,197 hours) appeared to be closer to the State requirement than other schools (1,060). She asked the school if it had established contingencies for inclement weather. Dr. Balsley affirmed that the school has established contingencies.

### **Section 4: Financial Framework**

Ms. Field Rogers noted that the school is trending in a positive direction and suggested that it continue to monitor enrollment to stay on a positive trajectory.

### **Section 5: Five-Year Planning**

Mr. Blowman asked the school summarize its five-year plan. Ms. Greene stated that CCS will continue its focus on moving from good to great. The school is transitioning to the Responsive Classroom model to improve academics and culture and climate. Staff went through a one-day training last week. Ms. Greene stated that it was only until recently that the school began to purchase curricula. Prior to that, curricula was developed in-house. Curricula has been purchased for writing (grades 3-5), ELA, foundational reading programs (grades K-2), and math.

Ms. Greene stated that CCS will move to standards-based grading. Every teacher participates in an afterschool PLC focused on assessment which currently meets bi-weekly for one hour to research assessment and standards-based grading. This group is charged with reviewing all of the current assessments to determine if they are aligned to standards. The standards-based grading plan will be rolled out over the next 3-5 years.

Mr. Blowman stated that the CSAC would like to see a continued focus on special education based on the concerns cited by Ms. Mazza. Ms. Mazza stated that the Corrective Action Plan that CCS is preparing for DDOE will help identify root causes, develop specific strategies, create a measurable baseline, and set targets.



## Conclusion

Mr. Blowman asked voting members of CSAC whether there was any additional information that it required to inform its decision-making.

The following information was requested:

- New science unit that is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards;
- Special education corrective action plan;

Mr. Blowman asked CSAC members whether there were any sections that they determined currently warrant a “Does Not Meet Standard” rating based upon information currently provided.

- Curriculum: Science unit

## Next Steps:

- The CSAC will provide the school with an Initial Report no later than October 20, 2015.
- The applicant will have the opportunity to submit a written response to the CSAC Initial Report, which is due by close of business on November 4, 2015.
- The final meeting of the CSAC will be held on November 10, 2015, at 1:00 p.m., in the 2nd floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building at 401 Federal Street, Dover DE.
- CSAC’s Final Report will be issued no later than November 20, 2014.
- A second public hearing will be held on December 8, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. in the 2nd floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building at 401 Federal Street, Dover DE.
- The public comment period ends on December 11, 2015.
- The State Board of Education will hold a meeting on December 17, 2015, in the 2nd floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building at 401 Federal Street, Dover DE, at which time the Secretary will announce his decision on the renewal application and, if required, the State Board will act on that decision.