



May 15, 2015

Honorable Mark Murphy
Secretary of Education
Delaware Department of Education
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901-3639

Dear Secretary Murphy,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Charter School Renewal Report for the MOT Charter School. The report highlights a high performing school that has consistently met the standards set by the State Board of Education for charter school academic, financial, and organizational performance. With this response, I provide further information in support of the Charter Renewal Report.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

As the report notes, MOT Charter achieved an overall rating of “Meets Standard” in each of the four years of the renewal period. MOT Charter’s performance rated an “Exceeds Standard” for ELA when compared to similar schools as well as the Appoquinimink School District.

Measure 1a. Percentage of Students Meeting Fall to Spring Instructional Growth Targets

Fall to spring growth is one of MOT Charter’s most important benchmarks of student success. The state’s target for percent of students meeting their growth target is 60%; MOT Charter’s school wide goal is 75%. As can be seen from the frameworks, we have made steady progress towards that goal.

The report notes that MOT Charter experienced a dip in the fall-to-spring growth of students in math and ELA in 2013-2014. While the percent of students who met their growth targets did decrease from prior years, the change, in large measure, is reflective of the DOE’s change in methodology when calculating growth for high achieving students. Forty percent of the MOT Charter students who did not meet their ELA growth targets achieved a “4” on the spring DCAS; roughly a quarter of them started and ended with a “4.” The results in math were similar. Thirty-four percent of the students who did not reach their growth target nonetheless achieved a “4” on the spring DCAS.

In addition to DCAS, MOT Charter School uses the NWEA MAP to monitor student fall-to-spring growth. 58% of the students who did not meet their growth target in ELA on the DCAS, met or exceeded their growth target on MAP. 48% of the students who did not meet their growth target in math on DCAS met or exceeded their growth target on the NWEA MAP. In general, NWEA has shown more reliability in measuring growth of high performers than DCAS.

Measure 1b. Percentage of Students in the Lowest Quartile Meeting Growth Targets

While we are confident that our high achieving students are being sufficiently challenged and are in fact excelling, the growth of the students in our lowest quartile has been a challenge over the years. The

report notes that MOT's rating for the growth of the lowest performing students in ELA fell from a meets in 2012-2013 to a does not meet.

The results from the NWEA MAP provide contrary evidence. On the NWEA MAP, 72% of the students in the lowest quartile met their fall-to-spring growth target.

With 50.4% of the lowest quartile achieving their growth target in ELA, MOT was 8 students short of the state's targeted growth for meets standard. In looking at the student growth disaggregated by grade level in ELA, 6 out of the 18 students in the lowest quartile in 7th grade met their growth target (approximately 33%). The average percent growth of the lowest quartile in the other grades is 56%. It is important to note that of the 12 students who did not meet their growth target in ELA in 7th grade, 8 of the students reached proficiency and several missed their growth target by narrow margins (1 to 5 points).

Measure 1c. Percentage of Students Making Sufficient Growth to Achieve Proficiency Status

The percent of students making sufficient growth to maintain or achieve proficiency continues to be strong earning MOT a meets standard in this category for math and a meets standard in ELA. In 2013-2014, 87.6% of MOT students made sufficient annual growth in math and 76.1% of students made sufficient annual growth in ELA.

Measure 2a. School Proficiency Compared to State Performance at the 90th and 20th Percentile

MOT's aggregate proficiency in math (86.2%) and ELA (87.8%) are significantly higher than the state's average proficiency rates of 66.2% and 70.2%. Indeed, MOT's aggregate proficiency in Math and ELA are just 4 percentage points or less off of the state's average proficiency at the 90th percentile.

Measure 2b. Percent Proficient by Demographic Subgroups

Disaggregating student performance data by subgroup reveals that MOT's demographic subgroups not only outperform the same subgroups at the state level, but in many cases outperform the general population of students as well. MOT's overall rating for subgroup performance is meets standard in both math and ELA.

MATH: MOT Charter achieved a "meets" rating in math in five out of six subgroups (Low Socio-Economic Status, African American, Asian American, Hispanic and White).

- 78.3% of African-American students at MOT were proficient in math. This far exceeds the state's overall proficiency rate (66.1%) by 21 percentage points and closely approximates the average proficiency of the state's 90th percentile (82%).
- In Math, MOT Charter's percent proficient for the SES, Hispanic, and White subgroups exceeded the state's average proficiency by 9.7%, 7.8% and 8.5% respectively.

- 10 of 32 students (31%) with disabilities at MOT were proficient in math. While far short of our target for performance of this subgroup, it mirrors the state’s overall proficiency rate for this subgroup of 30.7%.

While the proficiency rate for this subgroup is low, the NWEA MAP provides evidence that the 22 students who are not yet proficient are on track to be proficient. 14 of the 22 met their math growth target on the NWEA MAP.

ELA: In ELA, MOT Charter achieved an “exceeds” rating in the Low Socio-Economic subgroup and a “meets” rating in four of the five remaining subgroups.

- 83.3% of low socio-economic students at MOT were proficient in ELA. This far exceeds the state’s overall proficiency rate (62.3%) and also exceeds the state’s proficiency at the 90th percentile (83.0%).
- 80.0% of African-American students at MOT were proficient in ELA. This far exceeds the state’s overall proficiency rate (62.1%) by 17.9 percentage points and closely approximates the average proficiency of the state’s 90th percentile (84.8%).
- MOT Charter’s percent proficient for the Hispanic and White subgroups exceeded the state’s average proficiency by 7.7% and 8.2% respectively.
- 11 of 32 students (34.3%) with disabilities at MOT were proficient in ELA. While falling far short of our target for the performance of this subgroup, MOT Charter’s performance does exceed the state’s students with disabilities proficiency rate of 32.5%.

Once again, NWEA provides evidence that while these students are not yet proficient, they are far exceeding typical growth on the NWEA MAP, thus making gains towards proficiency.

- The one third grade student who did not reach proficiency grew 44 RIT points on the NWEA MAP; typical growth for a 3rd grade student is 9.3.
- The average RIT growth for the seven 4th graders who did not reach proficiency on DCAS was 21 points; typical growth for a 4th grade student is 6.9 RITs.
- The average RIT growth for the four 5th grade students was 9.5; typical growth for a 5th grade student is 5.2 RITs.
- The average RIT growth of the 6 6th grade students who did not reach proficiency on the DCAS was 11 RITs; typical growth for a 6th grade student is 4.1 RITs.

Measure 2c. School Proficiency Compared to Appoquinimink School District Proficiency

The Academic Performance Framework shows that MOT students’ performance in 2013-2014 (86.2% in Math, 87.8% in ELA) was outstanding when compared to the very strong performing Appoquinimink

School District. MOT Charter School achieved an “exceeds” rating in ELA for its performance compared to the ASD.

Measure 2d. School Proficiency Compared to Similar Schools Proficiency

Likewise, the Academic Performance Framework shows that MOT students’ performance in 2013-2014 (86.2% in Math, 87.8% in ELA) was outstanding when compared to similar schools. For the third year in a row, MOT Charter School achieved an “exceeds” rating in ELA for its performance compared to similar schools.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

MOT is a fiscally sound and financially solid school. We carefully monitor our spending and prioritize expenses to ensure that we never spend more than our revenues in any given year. Indeed, in twelve years of operation, the school ended the year with a financial surplus. The report notes that MOT Charter had one “does not meet” in that MOT Charter ended the 2013-2014 year with a negative cash flow of \$225,981.

However, in this instance negative cash flow is not a red flag for financial instability; but a reflection that MOT Charter has managed its resources well and was able to invest funds that it had saved to continue to grow and better serve our community. Even with the negative cash flow last year, at the end of the 2013-2014 school year, MOT had a cash reserve of approximately \$4.5 million.

This negative cash flow is the result of investments made to launch our high school. We hired an administrator and an administrative assistant to lead the planning and preparation for the high school. The planning phase for the high school required many other capital expenditures in the 2013-2014 school year. Excepting the capital expenditures for the high school, MOT Charter would have ended with a positive cash flow of \$673,654.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide additional information. We look forward to submitting our application for renewal in the fall.

Respectfully,



Linda J. Jennings
Head of School