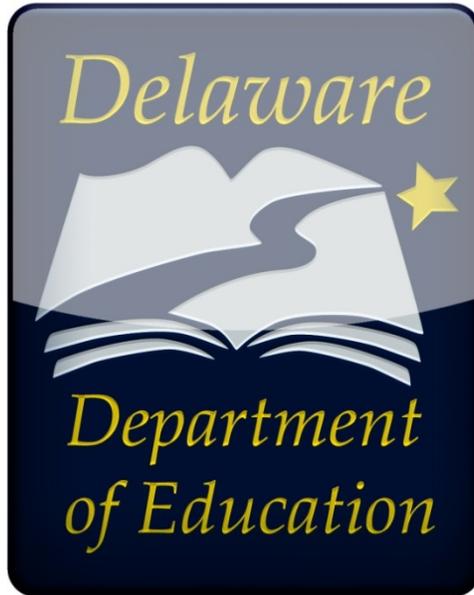


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



New Maurice J. Moyer Academy

MAJOR MODIFICATION APPLICATION

INITIAL REPORT

CSAC Meeting: June 12, 2014
Initial Report Published: June 17, 2014

In July 2013, Governor Jack Markell signed House Bill 165 into law, bringing sweeping changes to Delaware's existing charter school laws. This legislation included a number of provisions to strengthen the application process for charter school modifications.

Per 14 Del. C. §511(e), the first Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) meeting provided the applicant an opportunity in for an interview in support of the application, and provided the members of the Charter School Accountability Committee and the Delaware Department of Education with an opportunity to assess applicant capacity, allow the applicant to clarify information provided in the application, and gather additional information. The applicant was provided with an Initial Report that detailed areas of follow-up, and/or concerns identified by members of the CSAC during the Initial Meeting. The applicant then submitted a response to the Initial Report, which is considered part of the application.

After reviewing the response to the Initial Report, CSAC holds a Final Meeting to issue a recommendation on whether the application should be approved. This Final Report details CSAC's recommendation and any outstanding concerns about the application.

The following were in attendance at the Initial Meeting of the CSAC on June 12, 2014:

Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC)

- David Blowman, Deputy Secretary, DDOE (Chair to the Committee)
- Karen Field-Rogers, Associate Secretary, Financial Reform & Resource Management, DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE
- Theresa Bennett, Education Associate, Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development, DDOE

Ex-officio Members (Non-voting)

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

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, DOJ
- Jennifer Carlson, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Jennifer Nagourney, Executive Director, Charter School Office, DDOE

Representatives of New Maurice J. Moyer Academy

- Christopher Curry, Ed.D., Board President
- Chandra Sledge, Ed.D., Curriculum Director
- Nikia Wongus, Business Manager

Additional Attendees

- James Dick, Education Associate, Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development, DDOE
- Thalia Nawj, Special Assistant to the Secretary, DDOE

Section A: Core Questions

Ms. Bennett asked Moyer’s representatives to describe the school’s professional development to date on Common Core State Standards (CCSS). She noted that Moyer is not part of the department’s Common Ground initiative. Dr. Sledge explained that professional development on SpringBoard has not yet started, but introductory-level conversations around Common Core have been provided relative to expectations for teaching and learning, assessments (e.g. level of questioning), and what it means for professional practice. Dr. Sledge added that she started her position in November 2013 and was not aware the professional development provided in past years.

Ms. Bennett expressed concern that SpringBoard is aligned to CCSS but professional development is limited to the materials themselves. Ms. Bennett noted that the professional development will not cover CCSS nor the shifts and teaching to the shifts. Thus, teachers will need a strong foundation in CCSS to effectively implement SpringBoard. Dr. Sledge explained that 90% of the staff will be new to Moyer next year. She added that this year, most of the staff were inexperienced and uncertified but most of the new staff are experienced and dually-certified in their respective content areas.

The Committee asked Moyer’s representatives to describe the new curriculum rollout with 90% new staff. Dr. Sledge explained that she expects an intense rollout because the intent is to shift academic expectations culturally and socially. She added that hiring has been intentional and focused on recruiting staff that fit into a culture of change and transformation required for a turnaround environment. Dr. Curry stated that two weeks of intense summer training is planned around SpringBoard and turnaround.

Ms. Bennett stated that the rigor of the SpringBoard curriculum will be a significant shift for students and asked Moyer’s representatives to address this. Dr. Sledge explained that Moyer has a large special education population and most students are not performing on grade level.

The new educational diagnostician has been involved in planning discussions. She also noted that communications to parents have emphasized the increased expectations for students and the importance of alignment at home. Dr. Sledge further noted that teacher recruitment has focused on dually-certified teachers. Ms. Nagourney asked for the number of remaining open positions. Dr. Sledge stated that the remaining positions are 6th grade, Spanish and Art.

Ms. Field Rogers asked Moyer's representatives to indicate whether the SpringBoard professional development will be provided by internal or external sources (e.g. regional training). Dr. Curry explained that staff will be sent to SpringBoard. Dr. Sledge stated that some professional development will be led by internal staff through professional learning communities. Ms. Johnson asked Moyer's representatives for the dates of the regional training for which they have registered. Dr. Curry stated that Moyer has not yet registered but will do so after the purchase agreement has been finalized. Ms. Johnson noted that Moyer would not be eligible to host SpringBoard's Initial Teacher Institute (available May-August) because it requires a minimum of 14 English Language Arts and Mathematics teachers to host. Dr. Curry explained that he is in the process of identifying other districts and/or charters to collaborate with but dates and contracts have not been finalized. Ms. Johnson also asked Moyer's representatives to provide backup documentation listing the Science Coalition trainings Moyer teachers have attended.

Ms. Johnson asked for the percentage of incoming teachers that will teach core content courses. Dr. Sledge stated that all incoming teachers will teach core content course. Ms. Johnson asked Moyer's representatives to explain the school's high teacher turnover last year and again this year. Dr. Curry commented that the turnover is attributable to poor leadership by K12, Inc. Dr. Sledge underscored the need for strong teachers. She further noted that the professional expectations and competencies of this year's staff was not sufficient. Dr. Sledge stated that the Board of Directors is also replacing the school leader hired last year.

Ms. Johnson expressed concern that Moyer began introductory Common Core professional development this year, three years after the State adopted CCSS in August 2010. Dr. Sledge explained that she assessed staff when she joined Moyer in November 2013 and concluded that staff needed to begin at an introductory level. Dr. Curry explained that the Board of Directors realized that the management company, K12, Inc. was not providing accurate information regarding Moyer's performance. Mr. Blowman asked if the Board of Directors is taking a markedly different approach with oversight of management. Dr. Curry stated that the Board is doing so.

Ms. Johnson noted that Moyer's 2012-13 academic gains in ELA and Math were made using the current curriculum that is not aligned to State standards. She asked Moyer's representatives to describe any changes to the instructional model this year. Dr. Sledge stated that there were

not any changes this year. She explained that conversations with teachers focused on student outcomes, standards and objectives. Dr. Sledge also noted that Moyer's academic performance this year was low. Mr. Blowman asked Moyer's representatives to clarify that last year's gains are not sustainable without a change in approach. Dr. Sledge agreed and noted that Moyer has to take drastic measures to align its practices to high performing schools.

Ms. Johnson asked for verification of the content areas the department approved last year. Ms. Nagourney noted that on July 12, 2013, the department provided written feedback to Moyer indicating that World Languages and Visual Arts were approved. Additionally, on August 6, 2013, the department provided written feedback to Moyer indicating that Social Studies and Performing Arts were approved.

Ms. Mazza asked for Moyer's plan for providing professional development on grade band extensions for students working toward a certificate of completion. Dr. Sledge explained that the special education director will lead training through weekly professional learning communities. Ms. Mazza asked Moyer's representatives to indicate if there are any current students working toward a certificate. She explained that grade band extensions are modified standards for those students. Dr. Sledge noted that a few students are working toward a certificate.

Ms. Mazza asked Moyer's representatives to explain how they will ensure that strategies for special education students are research-based and evidence-based. Dr. Sledge explained that the special education director will build research-based strategies into the professional development calendar.

Ms. Field Rogers noted on page 6 of the modification application that Moyer expected to be 100% compliant with special education requirements by May 15, 2014 and requested a status update. Dr. Curry noted that Moyer met with the Exceptional Children Workgroup on June 11, 2014. Ms. Mazza explained that the department is entering into a compliance agreement with Moyer to address areas of non-compliance.

Ms. Field Rogers noted that the budget submitted with the current modification application did not include any revenue sheets. Additionally, it did not match the budget submitted with Moyer's previous modification application submitted December 19, 2013 which showed 19.25 units with 73 out of 227 (32%) students identified as special education. However, page 9 of the current application shows 38% identified as special needs. Ms. Field Rogers further noted that the FY15 budget is based on an enrollment of 265 but Moyer's Unit Count as of June 11, 2014 is only showing 204 students which does not meet the May 1st 80% enrollment requirement. Dr. Curry explained that Moyer has a history of enrolling students during the summer. Ms. Wongus projected that Moyer will meet the 265 enrollment level. She also explained that Moyer has

had an influx of six grade students in past years. Mr. Blowman noted that only 9 students are enrolled in 6th grade. Ms. Rogers requested a budget with actual enrollment figures. Ms. Field Rogers asked Moyer's representatives to confirm that FY14 summer pay has been set aside. Ms. Wongus stated that FY14 summer pay is set aside.

Section C: Education Program

Ms. Mazza asked Moyer's representatives to explain how it will ensure that Individualized Education Program (IEP) support services are provided with the blended model and address the different skill sets of students. Dr. Sledge explained that staff hiring and student scheduling is based on student needs. Regarding skill gaps, Dr. Sledge stated that student portfolios will benchmark student performance. She explained that Moyer has not had a strong data-driven culture to shift instructional practices and address student needs. Dr. Sledge also stated that Moyer will provide additional layers of support based on student needs.

Ms. Massett asked Moyer's representatives to describe plans for any benchmark assessments outside of Smarter Balanced. Dr. Sledge explained that Moyer will use the interim assessments provided by Smarter Balanced and does not plan to use outside assessments. Ms. Johnson noted that the Smarter Balanced interim assessments will not be available at the start of the school year. Dr. Sledge stated that student portfolios will also include socio-emotional data.

Ms. McCrae asked Moyer's representatives to explain why SpringBoard is the best fit for the school. Dr. Sledge explained that SpringBoard is rigorous and necessary to prepare students for college. She stated that a high quality staff is needed to implement the curriculum.

Ms. Bennett asked Moyer's representatives to explain Moyer's Response to Intervention (RTI) structure relative to data collection and scaffolding. Dr. Sledge stated that the current RTI structure is not ideal. She added that a guidance counselor is leading RTI coordination and next year, whole day professional development will be used more effectively. Dr. Sledge explained that the guidance counselor will follow the RTI model provided by the management company, K12, Inc. Ms. Bennett noted that along with the RTI structure and instructional support team, Moyer will need a continuum of services as well.

Ms. Mazza asked Moyer's representatives to describe any training the instructional support team has received relative to problem solving around instruction. Dr. Sledge explained that a consultant was hired to provide training. She also stated that in addition to the consultant, she used the Danielson model to coach teachers.

Ms. Mazza asked Moyer's representatives if they participate in the Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) project and describe any behavioral supports available for students who do not behave. Ms. Wongus explained that PBS was initiated in prior years and a number of strategies continue

to be implemented. Dr. Sledge stated that the culture at Moyer has improved. Dr. Curry explained that Moyer has partnered with Affinity Health and hired an additional dean who focuses solely on student conduct, particularly at the middle school.

Ms. Johnson referenced page 6 of the application and asked Moyer's representatives to provide the percentage of identified special education students with current IEPs. Dr. Sledge stated that all identified students have current IEPs but Ms. Mazza indicated that there are a percentage of IEPs that are not current.

Conclusion:

Mr. Blowman gave the reviewers the opportunity to restate any concerns about the application information and to clarify the additional information requested. The following concerns were noted:

- Ms. Field Rogers requested revenue sheets that are consistent relative to enrollment and the percentage of special education students. Additionally, she requested that Moyer submit a contingency budget based on 80% enrollment (205 students).
- Ms. McCrae requested evidence that the curricula the department approved last year (Science, Social Studies, World Languages and Visual and Performing Arts) were implemented effectively this year. For Science, Ms. McCrae requested documentation that teachers have attended Science Coalition training in accordance with their Memorandum of Understanding. For other content areas, provide any other evidence of implementation (e.g. lessons plans, etc.).
- Ms. Mazza noted that the Exceptional Children Resources workgroup has ongoing concerns which will be addressed through a compliance agreement.
- Ms. Bennett requested a more comprehensive professional development plan (beyond what SpringBoard has provided) that includes Moyer's RTI structure. She noted that teachers will not receive strategy instruction professional development from SpringBoard. Ms. Bennett further noted that an instructional leadership team is very different from an instructional support team. Without a strong RTI structure in place it will be difficult to determine if Tier I is effective.
- Ms. Bennett also requested a plan for assessments that will be used for the RTI structure in lieu of the Smarter Balanced assessment bank that will not be available until November 2014 or later.
- Ms. Johnson requested an amended timeline and locations for SpringBoard professional development and coaching that includes a signed contract with College Board.
- Ms. Bennett noted the following feedback based on the Math curriculum review:
 - Grade 7 Unit and Grade 10 Unit - aligned to CCSS and approved
 - Grade 6, 7, 8- Scope and sequence are aligned to the CCSS standards and contain all necessary elements
 - Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II Scope and Sequence:
 - All these courses need to show how they are aligning to CCSS. There is nothing in the scope and sequence document that shows this alignment

(the structure of these documents are different from Grades 6, 7, and 8). Are there any gaps in the alignment and if so what is the plan for filling those gaps?

- Unit 1 is missing in Algebra II. Is there a reason?
- In Algebra II, is there enough material for 180 days of study?
- In Geometry, there is no pacing for Unit 1
- Geometry Unit 6 has an incomplete pacing guide
- Pre-Calculus Unit 7 is the first Unit in the scope and sequence. Is there a reason for this rearrangement of units (or was this just a scanning issue?)?

Mr. Blowman articulated the next steps in the modification application process as follows:

- The first public hearing on this application is scheduled for Tuesday, June 17 at 5:30 p.m. in the 2nd Floor Auditorium in the Carvel State Office Building in Wilmington.
- The CSAC Initial Report will be issued to the applicants following the end of that hearing.
- The applicant will have the opportunity to submit a written response to the CSAC Initial Report. The response is due on July 2nd, no later than 12:00 p.m.
- The final meeting of the CSAC will be held on July 9, at 1:00 p.m., in the 2nd Floor Cabinet Room in the Townsend Building.
- A final public hearing will be held on August 5, at 5:00 p.m., in the 2nd Floor Cabinet Room in the Townsend Building.
- The process will conclude with the State Board of Education meeting on Thursday, August 21, where Secretary Murphy will present his decision.