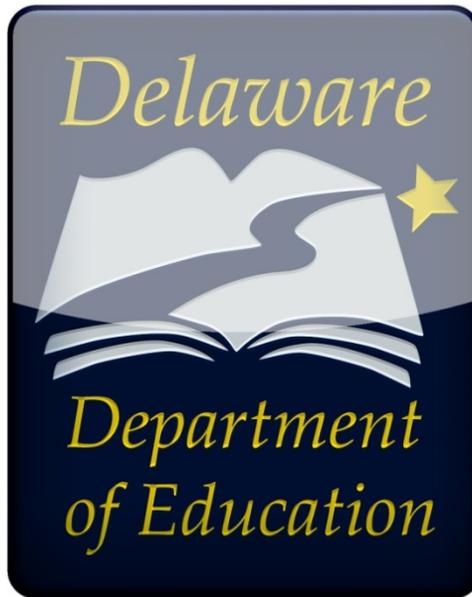


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



PIKE CREEK CHARTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

APPLICATION TO OPEN A CHARTER SCHOOL

Opening Date: August 2014

Grades: 6 - 8

Location: New Castle County

Date of Report: 21 May 2013

Background

Name	Pike Creek Charter Middle School	
Projected Enrollment	2013-14	(planning year)
	2014-15	245
	2015-16	320
	2016-17	380
	2017-18	380
	At Capacity	380
Mission	Pike Creek Charter's Mission is to promote pre-adolescent student achievement through rigorous academic instruction while incorporating wellness and fitness strategies.	
Vision	To ensure that students are prepared to succeed in the most prestigious academic settings and to live a healthy and physically active lifestyle.	

The Charter School Accountability Committee (Committee) convened on:

- 23 January 2013 for the Initial Meeting.
- 6 February 2013 for the Preliminary Meeting.
- 6 May 2013 for the Final Meeting to make a final recommendation based on the school's response to the Committee's Preliminary Report.

At the Final Meeting, the Committee focused on the following criteria that required further clarification from the Applicant.

- Founding Group and School Leadership
- Education Plan
- Performance Management
- Staffing
- Governance and Management
- Parent and Community Involvement
- Start-up and Operations
- Facilities
- Budget and Finance

Founding Group and School Leadership

The Committee discussed the Applicant's response to the Preliminary Report and noted the following.

- The Applicant's response provided a set of priorities that align to the mission and vision.
- The response also included examples of similar successful school models.
- At the Preliminary Meeting, the Committee concluded that the proposed school leader has very limited administrative and charter experience. In the response, the

Applicant decided to adopt a different administrative model: Head of School and Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The Founding Board has also identified a prospective candidate.

- At the Preliminary Meeting, the Committee concluded that the Founding Board has limited charter board experience. The response indicates that the Founding Board will utilize resources from the Delaware Charter Schools Network and National Charter School Resource Center as well as add additional board members with relevant expertise.
- At the Preliminary Meeting, the Committee raised a concern regarding how the proposed charter would be impacted if Red Clay Consolidated School District decided to build another school. The response indicated that Red Clay officials confirmed that it had no immediate plans to build a middle school.

*The Accountability Committee concluded that the Founding Group and School Leadership section **met** the standard.*

Education Plan

The Committee discussed the Applicant's response to the Preliminary Report and noted the following.

Curriculum and Instructional Design

English Language Arts – Meets Approval

- A suggestion was provided for unit development. Targets are mostly at the identification level. These do not match the rigor of the Common Core State Standards. There is not a range of reading or writing conducive to the grade levels or the NAEP percentages on page 5 of the Common Core State Standards.

Mathematics – Meets Approval

- The Scope and Sequence documents display an appropriate improvement from the response to the previous findings.

Science – Meets Approval

- The Applicant submitted a letter of intent to seek membership in the Delaware Science Coalition. Additionally, the Applicant submitted Scope and Sequence documents that were approved.

Social Studies – Meets Approval

Health – Meets Approval

Physical Education – Meets Approval

World Languages – Not Applicable

- The school has elected to eliminate World Languages in order to implement instruction in the Visual and Performing Arts.

Visual and Performing Arts – Meets Approval

- It appears from the Scope and Sequence documents provided that the school intends to employ ten-week arts learning experiences for their students, beginning with Music, followed by Theatre and finally Visual Art. The applicant ought to note that the intent of the current Delaware State School Board regulation is that instruction in the arts is mandated for grade 6 whereas the arts may be electives in grades 7 and 8.
- It is interesting to note that all grades cycle through arts disciplines at the same time of year.
- While units of instruction were identified in the Scope and Sequence documents, it would have been helpful if the units were named; thus, providing clarity on the instructional intent. The courses appeared to be survey courses.
- There appears to be an excess of learning targets cited. For example, twenty-seven learning targets were cited as the focus in the first 7th grade music unit.

Technology Plan – Does Not Meet Approval

- Curriculum and plans for instructional technology are still incomplete.
- There is minimal integration of technology in core content areas, for example:
 - Mathematics. The use of technology is simplistic (e.g., draw geometric shapes).
 - English Language Arts. The use of technology is minimal. Keyboarding is mentioned; however, no plans are provided as to how students are to become proficient at keyboarding.
 - No mention was made of an Internet safety curriculum.
- Although the technology teacher is listed, there is no Scope and Sequence provided. It appears to have been removed.
- There is no mention of an instructional technology coach in the Organization Chart.
- There is no mention of an Information Technology staff person (hardware support) in the organization.
- A framework for technology integration is still recommended.
- The school's response states, "Technology is deeply imbedded within Pike Creek Charter Middle School's (PCCMS) instruction, curriculum development, and assessment strategies. As detailed in the budget, PCCMS is looking to provide Smart Boards in at least the ELA/Math classrooms in each grade level; mobile laptop carts and desktop computers in the classrooms to also support the students and teachers. With the understanding that technology is always advancing, currently, these forms of technology are what we have identified to support the needs of our teachers and students." However, what is stated in the response is not represented in the submitted Scope and Sequence documents.

Student Performance Standards

- The Applicant has clarified the 75% proficiency requirement in mathematics and English Language Arts. There is concern as to why the project requirements for Physical Education/Health and Nutrition have been deleted from the chart because these requirements would align directly with the school's mission.
- The response did address the previously cited issue with the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) requirements.

High School Graduation Requirements (Transition Planning and Success Plans)

- The Pike Creek Charter School's response outlines how the staff will use the Student Success Plan beginning in 8th grade to develop a six-year transition plan including

courses needed for entry into the workforce or post-secondary education, support services necessary to prepare the student to graduate from high school, and active monitoring of progress by a crew member at the end of each trimester.

- The Applicant also indicated that the students would participate in groups that explore the areas of self-advocacy, responsibility, goal-setting, career exploration, study skills, and organization and that additional strategies aligned with academic success would be implemented on a case-by-case basis to prepare the individual student for transition to high school.
- In addition, although the school indicates that a meeting will be held with the required staff to review and discuss a child's IEP, Student Success Plan and progress, compliance with IDEA, the IEP process, and special education services, supports, accommodations, and modifications, it is unclear in relation to transition planning for students with disabilities ages 14 – 21. This would include, but is not limited to, post-high school goals, activities and services to reach the student's goals, measurable annual goals/benchmarks, and collaboration with outside agencies.

High School and Graduation Requirements (All 8 – 12 Grade Students Have Success Plans)

- Information regarding the development of student success plans and the use of the State's on-line Student Success Plan platform is provided.

School Calendar and Schedule

- The Applicant provided an updated school calendar that was color-coded to reflect professional development, PCCMS Community Meetings, Professional Learning Communities as well as instructional days, interim assessments, and school holidays.

School Culture

Additional minor edits to bullying policy ought to include the following.

- To be in compliance with the law, the first statement in section III. A (bullying definition), should have the period deleted after the word "property." Also, a semicolon and the word "or" needs to be added after the word "property."
- Section V. B. b. and c. references the reader back to section IV but should reference the reader back to section VI.
- Section VI. B. 3 should be cited as 14 Del C. §4123A.
- Section XII. A. Change "202(f) of this title" to "14 Del. C. § 202(f)". This will clarify the title being referenced.

Supplemental Programming

- The School states that all students will be required to participate in after school activities Monday through Thursday. Therefore, transportation will be provided at the conclusion of after-school activities, which is the end of PCCMS's day for all students. It should be noted that the instructional day concludes at 2:25. However, the school day does not conclude until 3:40 for all students. Transportation will be provided on Fridays at 2:25pm after the instructional day.

English Language Learners (ELLs)

There are significant errors in this section related to ELLs.

- The Applicant indicates that at-risk student populations will not be served. It would not be possible to screen for English language proficiency without administering a Home Language Survey and diagnostic screener. This is a Federal requirement.
- The initial diagnostic test to determine English language proficiency is not the same as the annual ACCESS test. The W-APT is the assessment that is given to students within the first 25 days of enrollment, not the ACCESS. The test is not merely “re-administered;” these are two separate instruments and both are required. The application does not demonstrate a clear understanding of the requirements.
- Screening for migrant students is done by using the Migrant Agricultural Work Survey which should be included in the student registration packet. E-School only lists the students who are potential migrant students; it does not contain the list of identified migrant students. The school refers potential students to the SEA (State Education Agency) and DDOE conducts the migrant interviews and enrolls the student into the migrant program and the SEA notifies them of the migrant status.
- The application does not indicate that services will be provided to all ELLs. All ELLs must be served with ELL services until they reach a Tier C Level 5.0 on the WIDA ACCESS test and can be exited from the ELL program.
- Teachers and/or contracted staff who provide services to ELL students must be ESL certified and provide research-based instruction.

Student Recruitment and Enrollment

At the Preliminary Meeting the Committee concluded that the Applicant did not provide a detailed recruitment/marketing plan. In addition, the enrollment preferences outlined in Attachment 8 did not mirror the Delaware statute and the bylaws.

Recruitment/Marketing Plan

- The response to the cited concerns was satisfactory.

Enrollment Preferences

- Preferences in Attachment 8 have been revised and partially meet the statutory requirements. The five-mile radius preference is presumed to mean within 5 miles of the school. There is still a stated preference for "Founding Board children"; the allowable preference is for children of the school's founders, as that is defined by the Founding Board as noted in 14 DE Admin Code 275.8.1.1. By statute, children of a school's founders cannot constitute more than 5% of the total student population. When the founding Board of Directors sets standards for determining founders, anyone whose sole significant contribution to the school was monetary may not be included. Clarification is needed –how founders are identified by applicant and what standards has the founding Board of Directors established to determine who are founders?

Student Discipline

- The reference to H.B. 322 under “dismissible offenses” was updated to 14 Del Code §4112. It also needs to be updated under “suspendible offenses.”

*The Accountability Committee concluded that the Education Plan section **did not meet the standard based on the following subsections:***

- *Technology Plan*
- *Student Performance Standards*
- *High School Graduation Requirements (Transition Planning and Success Plans)*
- *School Culture*
- *Supplemental Programming*
- *English Language Learners (ELLs)*
- *Student Recruitment and Enrollment (Enrollment Preferences)*
- *Student Discipline*

Performance Management

The Committee discussed the Applicant's response to the Preliminary Report and noted the following.

Mission-Specific Educational Goals

- The school included appropriate quantitative and qualitative measures in its revised response to the mission-specific educational goals criterion.

Mission-Specific Organizational Goals

- The response included mission-specific organizational goals that reflect the mission of the school.

Student Performance Levels and Academic Needs

- The response from the Applicant was adequate.

Measuring and Evaluating Academic Progress

- The response provided by the Applicant was sufficient to answer the clarifying questions posed in the Preliminary Report.

Information System to Manage Student Performance

- The response provided by the Applicant was sufficient to answer the clarifying questions posed in the Preliminary Report.

Training and Support for Teachers in Data Use

The Applicant answered all questions posed in the Preliminary Report adequately. However, there remain several concerns with regard to the collective responses to this subsection and the prior two subsections (*Measuring and Evaluating Academic Progress and Information System to Manage Student Performance*)

- Each section provides an adequate response to the questions posed in the Preliminary Report and, as such, is considered "met;" however, each section lists the head of school as the primary lead for planning, implementing, managing and providing on-going sustainability of the programming. The potential workload would be immense, especially with regard to the day-to-day functions of the school and other responsibilities inherent to the head of school position. This capacity issue could be mitigated by the new administrative structure.

- If the application is approved, a condition is warranted that the Applicant provide a more detailed contingency plan in the event that the head of school is unable to shoulder the immense workload indicated in this application. While it is stated that additional staffing will be expected to take on several responsibilities as of Year 5 and beyond, it is prudent to plan for capacity building prior to the Year 5 projection.

*The Accountability Committee concluded that the Performance Management section **met** the standard with a condition (see Training and Support for Teachers in Data Use)*

Staffing

The Committee discussed the Applicant's response to the Preliminary Report and noted the following.

Staff Structure

- The staffing plan for hiring aligns to the educational plan and mission.
- An outstanding question: How will the Charter measure meeting the Vision/Mission against the staffing plan on an on-going basis?
- The compensation package and salary budget is complete and competitive with surrounding districts. In addition, the plan indicates raising salaries to the Red Clay salary schedule by the third or fourth year of operation.
- Hiring both a Head of School and a Director of Curriculum and Instruction is a positive move for school operations and establishing an instructional leader.
- The professional development plan aligns with the state's Common Core initiative and the continuation of Professional Learning Communities to examine and analyze data.
- A retention strategy is absent from the plan. Based on the evaluations, how will the charter school incentivize teachers and administrators to stay?
- The plan indicates that DPAS II will be used to evaluate teachers and administrators.
- More specifics are needed to describe *how* DPAS II will be used in an overall plan.
- The response does not include an outline/plan for exiting teachers/administrators based on progressive discipline or for ineffective performance.
- The staffing plan does not include a timeline with specifically defined steps. It is very general and a good start; however, it needs to be fleshed out in more detail.
- The recruitment strategy should include participation in job fairs in Delaware and in surrounding states.
- Additional documentation that would help solidify deficiencies listed above:
 - Organizational Chart that clearly defines roles and responsibilities.
 - Personnel Handbook that clearly outlines expectations, evaluation process, and progressive discipline as well as procedures for staff dismissal.
 - A clearly outlined interview/selection process with pre-defined competencies. Possible discussion of using an outside vendor to help initially establish a human capital plan.

Professional Development

- The Applicant has provided a more detailed professional development plan with a timeline. However, the Applicant included participation in DDOE's Common Ground for the Common Core initiative in Summer 2013 and Summer 2014. Common Ground kicked off in March and ends May 2014. To participate in this initiative, a guiding team

of teachers, instructional specialists and administrators was required, and Pike Creek is not yet an established school.

- Measurable outcomes for professional development have been provided at the school level; but no measureable outcomes for students have been provided.

*The Accountability Committee concluded that the Staffing section **met** the standard with conditions based on the following subsection:*

- *Professional Development*

Governance and Management

The Committee discussed the Applicant's response to the Preliminary Report and determined that the response was satisfactory.

*The Accountability Committee concluded that the Governance and Management section **met** the standard.*

Parent and Community Involvement

The Committee discussed the Applicant's response to the Preliminary Report and determined that the response was satisfactory.

*The Accountability Committee concluded that the Parent and Community Involvement section **met** the standard.*

Start-up and Operations

The Committee discussed the Applicant's response to the Preliminary Report and noted the following.

Start-up Plan

- The Applicant provided a detailed narrative outlining the tasks that need to be completed. The narrative included the various steps to be taken to ensure completion.

Transportation

- The transportation eligibility criteria in 14 DE Admin Code 1105 cannot be modified by a charter school or school district.
- It is not clear where the school intends to place HUBS and what level of transportation service would be provided to students living in the same district as the school. HUBS may be placed outside of the district where the school is located for those students who live outside of that district.

Safety and Security

- The applicant's response met the standard.

Lunch/Breakfast

The applicant acknowledged the following areas of concern in its response:

- Joining the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)/School Breakfast Program (SBP)
 - If approved, the Applicant **must** notify the School Nutrition Program Manager, Aimee Beam, as soon as possible if the decision is to participate so that the Applicant can begin necessary trainings, application process, etc.
- NSLP/ SBP Procurement Process
 - Once enrollment in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)/School Breakfast Program (SBP) is established, DDOE School Nutrition Programs staff will guide the charter through the required process. Please note that this should be done in a timely manner to be certain of securing a vendor for the planned opening in the 2014-2015 school year.
- Acknowledgement of determining student eligibility for school meals
 - The charter response is adequate.
- Plan for obtaining a Food Establishment Permit
 - The response indicates that the Applicant is aware that a current permit is needed to participate in the NSLP/SBP.

*The Accountability Committee concluded that the Start-up and Operations section **did not meet** the standard based on the following subsection(s):*

- *Transportation*

Facilities

The Committee discussed the Applicant's response to the Preliminary Report and noted the following.

School and student safety

- Pike Creek Charter Middle School (PCCMS) remains in agreement with the landlord that the other organizations currently located at Delaware Swim and Fitness will be moving with the current owner to a new location. The only organization that will be present once PCCMS takes over the lease of the building is PCCMS.

Transportation

- Student transportation to and from the school will not negatively impact traffic or parking, as PCCMS will remain the sole occupant of the building. There are 285 parking spots at the Delaware Swim and Fitness site.

Proper inspections and precautions to ensure proper air ventilation and mold eradication, if any.

- Proper inspections and precautions will be taken per local regulations to ensure proper air ventilation and mold eradication, if any. This initiative can be seen as part of the CAM expenses for maintenance that is included in the budget. This will be administered and overseen by the landlord's aquatic business.

Review of Delaware laws and regulations regarding asbestos in school construction/renovation.

- Prior to renovations, the Applicant will review Delaware laws and regulations regarding asbestos in school construction. This will take place in the Planning Year during the renovation process with the selected vendor.

*The Accountability Committee concluded that the Start-up and Operations section **met** the standard.*

Budget and Finance

- The Committee discussed the Applicant's response to the Preliminary Report and noted the following.
- The revised budget worksheets show a "Prior Year Carryover" amount of \$900,000 in Year 0 (State and Local Revenue). It is unclear where this amount comes from as the school would not be entitled to any State or Local funds in Year 0.
- The "Prior Year Carryover" amounts in subsequent years do not match the ending balance from the previous year. There is no explanation of why the amounts do not match. The narrative provided simply states that "Carryover funds from prior fiscal year budgets and 'Other Funds' " were brought forward. The revised budget information submitted did not include worksheets for Federal or Other Funds; thus, it is unclear how these numbers were calculated.
- If "Prior Year Carryover" amounts are excluded from the budget worksheets, the school will have a deficit of nearly \$20,000 in Year 1.
- The response to the Preliminary Report indicates that the Applicant will seek grant funds from private foundations. If this is the source of the Year 0 funding, how would the timing of these grants work in relation to the timeline submitted for Year 0 activities? Have any grant funds been secured to date? The Applicant states that there have been discussions with lenders regarding loan options if grant funds are not secured. Have any budgets been prepared with estimated loan payments if this option is selected? It does not appear that this scenario was included in any of the budgets submitted.

*The Accountability Committee concluded that the Budget and Finance section **did not meet** the standard.*

Summary and Recommendations

Application Sections	Charter School Accountability Committee's Recommendations
(1) Founding Group and School Leadership	Met
(2) Education Plan	Not Met
(3) Performance Management	Met with a Condition
(4) Staffing	Met with Conditions
(5) Governance and Management	Met
(6) Parent and Community Involvement	Met
(7) Start-up and Operations	Not Met
(8) Facilities	Met
(9) Budget and Finance	Not Met

The Charter School Accountability Committee recommends to the Secretary of Education that the application for Pike Creek Charter Middle School **not be approved**.

Appendix A

List of Attendees

Final Meeting of the Charter School Accountability Committee

Pike Creek Charter Middle School

6 May 2013

Members of the Committee

- David Blowman, Committee Chair, Deputy Secretary of Education
- Karen Field Rogers, Manager, Financial Reform and Resource Management
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Curriculum Access, and Differentiation of Instruction
- Debora Hansen, Education Associate, Visual and Performing Arts; Charter School Curriculum Review
- Paul Harrell, Education Associate, Public/Private Partnerships
- Donna Johnson, Executive Director, State Board of Education (non-voting)
- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter Schools Network (non-voting)

Staff to the Committee

- Catherine T. Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Finance Charter School
- Chantel Janiszewski, Education Associate, Charter School Office
- Sheila Kay-Lawrence, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office

Representatives of the Pike Creek Charter Middle School

- Michael Smith, Board President
- Brooke Balan, Board Member
- Robyn Sheehan, Board Member