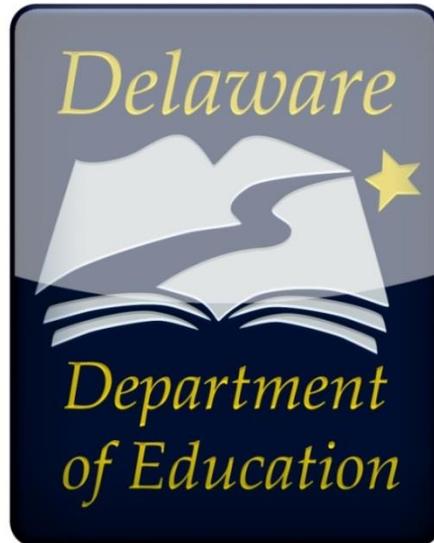


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Prestige Academy

FORMAL REVIEW
FINAL REPORT

CSAC Final Meeting: June 3, 2015
CSAC Final Report Published: June 5, 2015

CSAC FINAL RECOMMENDATION: PROBATION WITH CONDITIONS

The following were in attendance at the Final Meeting of the CSAC on June 3, 2015:

Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- David Blowman, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Deputy Secretary of Education, DDOE
- Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary for Adult Education and School Supports, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Charles Taylor, Community Member and Interim Head of School
- Tasha Cannon, Deputy Officer Talent Recruitment, Selection and Strategy, Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU), DDOE

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

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

Representatives of Delaware Prestige Academy

- Jack Perry, Executive Director, Prestige Academy
- Cordie Greenlea, Incoming Executive Director, Prestige Academy
- Dana Davisson, Academic Dean, Prestige Academy
- Michelle Lambert, Accountant, Prestige Academy
- Rodney Merriweather, Board Treasurer, Prestige Academy

Discussion

Mr. Blowman stated that the purpose of the meeting was for the CSAC to continue its review of the relevant statutory criteria to determine whether the charter holder is violating the terms of its charter and, if so, whether remedial measures are warranted.

Mr. Blowman noted that the grounds for the formal review are outlined in a letter to the Prestige Academy (“Prestige”) Board, dated April 23, 2015, which include the following potential violations of the law and charter:

- Financial viability;
- Fidelity to the approved charter; and
- Academic performance.

Mr. Blowman noted that Prestige had submitted a set of documents to the Department of Education in advance of the Initial Meeting of the CSAC, which had been added to the record. These documents included a revised budget and organizational chart based on the updated student enrollment number and documentation of academic performance throughout the current school year.

Mr. Blowman noted that an Initial Meeting of the CSAC was held on May 13, 2015 and an Initial Report was issued on May 18, 2015. During the meeting, the CSAC requested the following documents:

- Documentation demonstrating that Prestige has moved forward with making changes in its academic performance, including any current school year student data that points to academic growth;
- Revamped teacher selection model;
- Any early level data that demonstrates the selection of higher-quality teachers; and
- Trend information on the school’s special education population and need/classification within that population.

The CSAC confirmed that each of the requested documents had been received in their entirety, along with Prestige’s response to the Initial Report.

Financial Viability

Mr. Blowman noted that, as of June 3, Prestige’s enrollment stands at 224 students, which is 28 students below the 80% threshold.

Date	# Enrolled Students	Approved Total	% of Approved Total
April 1	186	315	59%
May 1	213	315	68%
# Students in May 5 Budget Projections	213	315	68%
May 11	215	315	68%
June 3	224	315	71%

Ms. Field Rogers noted that Prestige can remain financially viable as long as its enrollment continues to increase.

Mr. Blowman requested an update on student recruitment. Dr. Perry responded that Prestige held a basketball tournament on May 30, which was attended by over 100 young men from the community. He stated that recruitment coordinators are currently in the process of following up with the young men in an effort to recruit them to attend Prestige.

Board Capacity¹

Mr. Taylor asked whether the Board has participated in training provided by the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (“DANA”). Mr. Merriweather and Ms. Lambert responded that the Board has participated in state-issued training, but has not participated in training provided by DANA. Mr. Merriweather added that Building Excellent Schools has provided training to the Board during its annual retreats. He also noted that several individuals have participated in the Citizens Budget Oversight Committee financial trainings offered in Dover.

Mr. Taylor asked how many members are on the Board and what types of members are on the Board. Dr. Perry responded that there are currently 12 Board members. Of the 12, one is a parent, one is a teacher, and the others are community members with no connection to the school. Mr. Taylor asked whether the Board is active. Mr. Merriweather responded that the Board is very active and committed.

¹ Board capacity was identified as a potential violation of the school’s charter at the Initial Meeting of the CSAC on May 13, 2015.

Fidelity to the Approved Charter

Mr. Blowman noted that fidelity to the approved charter ties to financial viability and academic performance.

Academic Performance

Dr. Perry noted that the school had updated information on trend data that it wished to provide. Ms. Davisson stated that the report that was submitted on June 1 was internal data specifically based around the Scholastic Reading Inventory (“SRI”) and Scholastic Math Inventory (“SMI”), as there was no baseline of fall-to-spring data. She noted that the fall-to-winter growth data was provided because SMI and SRI spring data collection did not start until this week due to the SBAC testing window. She noted that 6th grade has completed SRI and, out of the 66 students who were tested, 83% met their growth goal. When disaggregated for learning support, 81% of students identified as having an Individualized Education Program (“IEP”) or 504 Plan met their growth goal. She noted that the school’s goal is 60%.

Mr. Taylor asked what the school has done differently since the fall to impact student results. Ms. Davisson responded that one difference between this school year and last school year is the implementation of Power Hour, which allows for an additional four hours of intervention per week for the school’s learning support students. She stated that students are receiving a lot of targeted small group support on their benchmarks, which has positively impacted their performance on SMI, SRI, and SBAC. Additionally, the school had never before done performance tasks. However, this year, staff has received a lot of training around performance tasks, as well as training and experience with students in not only math and ELA, but also in science and social studies. Whereas the school has always used embedded assessments and problem-based learning for Springboard Math, the school has also expanded that into other curriculum areas. Finally, the school had never used Common Core-aligned program “EngageNY” before, but piloted it in 6th grade English and 5th grade math and have seen tremendous results, particularly in the 6th grade SRI data.

Mr. Taylor asked whether Prestige has seen a lot of staff turnover this year and Ms. Davisson responded that it has.

Mr. Taylor asked for more information about “grit.” Ms. Davisson responded that Prestige identified a need to find staff with grit, commitment to Prestige’s mission, and a growth mindset. Grit relates to Prestige’s mission alignment and is also being taught to Prestige’s students, particularly with things such as Smarter Balanced and performance tasks. Teachers have to do all of the things that the students have to do, including performance tasks, SRI, and Smarter Balanced practice assessments. Ms. Davisson added that Prestige also participated in The Five Dysfunctions of a Team Workshop. Mr. Taylor asked about weaknesses that were identified and Ms. Davisson responded that trust is the weakest area, particularly due to teacher turnover from the previous year. She identified a need to build trust through activities,

off site collaboration and socialization. She noted that the school intends to tap into the specific talents of its teachers, increase positive reinforcement, and allow teachers to teach professional development in their areas of strength. Mr. Taylor asked whether the school anticipates that these efforts will have a long-term effect and Ms. Davisson responded that the school expects the staff-led professional development and leadership will trickle into the next school year.

Mr. Taylor asked about the school's staff attrition rate for next year. Ms. Davisson and Dr. Perry responded that, of those staff members that the school wishes to keep, all but one intends to return, as one teacher has accepted a leadership position in a new charter school. Ms. Davisson added that the school wishes to see more dual-certification next year.

Mr. Taylor asked approximately how many students are in Tiers 2 and 3 of the RtI process. Ms. Davisson estimated that 40-45 students are in Tiers 2 and 3.

Ms. Mazza noted that the Exceptional Children Resources workgroup performed special education monitoring at Prestige in December 2014 and commented that Prestige is on track to make necessary corrections that resulted from that monitoring visit. She noted that she met with Prestige's special education staff on at least two occasions and that the staff has been very responsive.

Mr. Blowman noted for the record that, at the Initial Meeting, there was a comment made that part of Prestige's academic difficulties resulted from an influx of special education students, which was attributable to Prestige's success with special education students. However, he noted that the data demonstrates that the number of special education students hasn't changed significantly. Rather, the percentage of special education students has increased because the number of traditional students has decreased.

Ms. Cannon noted that Prestige's recruitment and selection toolkit is a very extensive document and commended the school for the amount of thought and work that was put into its development. Ms. Cannon commented, however, that the \$16,000 budget is a little high. She recommended that Prestige spend less on ads and job posting and more on staff candidate travel and the employee referral program. She asked who will be responsible for overseeing the recruitment and selection process. Dr. Perry stated that, currently, it is the school leadership team: Dr. Perry, Ms. Davisson, and the current grade-level chairs. He described the current process. Moving forward, however, Mr. Greenlea stated that the team will be restructured. It will still be the leadership team, but the school is looking to form partnerships with the University of Delaware and Wilmington University.

Mr. Blowman asked Mr. Greenlea to describe his plans for the upcoming school year. Mr. Greenlea responded that he first plans to address student enrollment. He noted that, to aid in that effort, he would like to add a Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics ("STEM") program with the Gateway grant, one or two Computer Science programs, and potentially the

Advancement Via Individual Determination (“AVID”) Program. He stated that he would like to have an intentional instructional delivery system across curriculum and extracurricular programs. He stated that he plans to try to further engage the middle-of-the-road students, noting that schools tend to spend its resources on its highest and lowest performing students. With regards to special education, he intends to focus on how students are identified and how Prestige can best appropriate its resources. He would like to have a co-teaching model for English and math, and a push-in model for science and social studies. Finally, he intends to separate operations from academic instruction so that the responsibilities are clear-cut.

Mr. Merriweather added that the engaged Board is willing to put whatever it can behind the programs that Mr. Greenlea needs in order to achieve success moving forward. He added that the Board takes the position that it is in and its need to improve very seriously.

Conclusion:

In summary, Mr. Blowman noted that Prestige has provided a budget that demonstrates viability below its current enrollment numbers, but is still short of the 80% threshold. He noted that it will take time to see turnaround in the school’s enrollment numbers. With respect to Board capacity, he noted that the Board has been actively engaged in addressing the underlying issues. Additionally, the school has provided academic data that demonstrates some improvement. However, academic growth will need to be seen reflected in other measures over time as it becomes available.

The CSAC voted to recommend that Prestige be placed on probation for a period of one year, subject to the following conditions:

1. Submit monthly updates on recruitment and enrollment through September 30, 2015;
2. Submit internal student achievement data and state assessment testing data demonstrating academic growth as it becomes available (June 2015, January 2016, and June 2016);
3. Submit a budget demonstrating continued financial viability based on September 30 enrollment by October 31, 2015; and
4. Board members must participate in training offered by the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement by October 1, 2015.

Ms. Mazza abstained from the vote because she did not attend the Initial Meeting.

Next Steps:

- A second and final public hearing will be held on June 9, 2015 beginning at 5:00 p.m, in the 2nd Floor Auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building located at 820 N. French St. in Wilmington.
- The public comment period is open, and will close on June 12, 2015.

- The Secretary will announce his decision at the June 18, 2015 State Board of Education meeting, beginning at 1:00 p.m., in the 2nd Floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building located at 401 Federal Street in Dover.