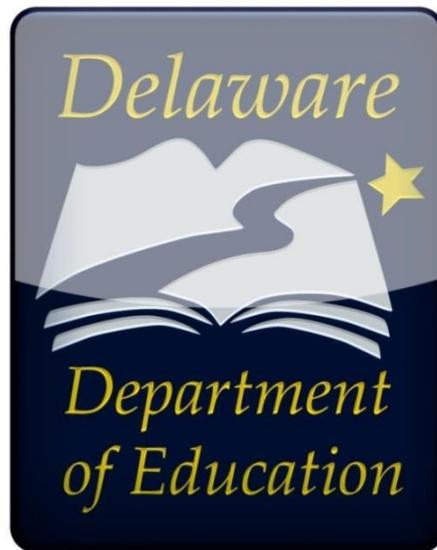


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School

**RENEWAL APPLICATION
INITIAL REPORT**

CSAC Initial Meeting: October 23, 2017
CSAC Initial Report Published: October 30, 2017

By September 30, 2017, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School submitted an application to renew its charter. Consideration of this application is in accordance with the applicable provisions of 14 *Del. C. Ch. 5*, including § 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 the 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, Performance Agreements and, discussion during the CSAC meetings.

The following were in attendance at the Initial Meeting of the CSAC on October 23, 2017:

Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- David Blowman, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Associate Secretary, Operations Support, DDOE
- Karen Field Rogers, Deputy Secretary, DDOE
- Amy Baker-Sheridan, Education Associate, Academic Supports
- Tracey Neugebauer, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Charles Taylor, Head of School, Providence Creek Academy
- Seher Ahmad, Data Fellow, Performance Supports

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Delaware Department of Justice, Counsel to the Committee
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Finance Office, 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

- Maria Alonso, Board Chair, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School
- Silvia Simmons, Education Diagnostician, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School
- Jill Lenihan, Instructional Coach, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School
- Mercedes Alonso, Educational Consultant, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School
- Jose Aviles, Head of School, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School
- Karen Thorpe, Financial Consultant, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School
- Riccardo Stoeckicht, Independent Consultant, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School
- Maria Matos, Board Treasurer, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School
- Shawn Stevens, Board Vice-Chair, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School
- Norma Antongiorgi, Board Member, Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School

Discussion

Section 1: Overview

Maria Alonso, Board Chair of Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School (AAACS) provided an overview of the school's progress over the last three years. She shared that the renewal process provided the members of the school the opportunity to evaluate the school's progress over the last three years including their challenges and accomplishments. Ms. Alonso shared the school's mantra of "Unity, Integrity, Discovery, Ownership and Self-discipline" (UNIDOS) as the core of the Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School program. Ms. Alonso spoke of the school's challenges beginning with start-up which included staffing, leadership, facilities, and support services for students. Ms. Alonso shared how the school overcame these barriers by:

- adding a school counselor and deans of students;
- moving campuses to provide additional outdoor space and a playground;
- adding their own transportation system;
- adopting new dual language curricula;
- partnering with experts to enhance the dual language program;
- partnering with EL and professional development, and;
- strong connections with parents.

The school participated in an organizational assessment that included parents and school stakeholders. Ms. Alonso provided examples of how the growth mindset of the school is implemented through continuous opportunities for all stakeholders to provide feedback, and through community partnerships including SAP, Delaware Pathways, Compassionate Schools Consortium, and the School Mindfulness Program. The school has implemented a data-driven improvement model for academic, organizational, and financial growth and is committed to give children a highly effective second language program.

Section 2: Academic Framework

Jose Aviles, Head of School, reviewed the demographics of the school.

David Blowman posed questions about the enrollment of the school including the large kindergarten class and recruitment efforts.

The school shared information about their enrollment activities by connecting with the communities around the new school facilities, sharing their unique instructional and social emotional programs, connections with school community including word of mouth of parents, and transportation programs. The school highlighted their connections with parents.

David Blowman asked how the school was managing their growth special education population.

The school shared that they have hired a full-time special education teacher, a full-time para-professional, a full-time special education consultant, and an education diagnostician to service

students in their inclusion program. The school shared that only nine (9) students have speech services and thirty (30) students are identified as students with disabilities (SWD) other than speech. The school psychologist is not bi-lingual but the school contracts for translation services as well as a doctoral student through Immaculata University that is bi-lingual.

The school shared that they attribute the increase in EL and SWD students due to word of mouth by parents. Mr. Aviles shared how they utilize staff and RTI programs to support EL and students with disabilities. The school shared that they believe that the change in location also contributed to the change in demographics.

Mr. Blowman pointed out that the school had one year of state-level academic data. Tracy Neugebauer shared data for students with disabilities that took the assessment. She encouraged the school to continue to analyze the data around this sub-group when planning academically. Ms. Ahmad pointed out the school earned five (5) stars within On Track to Graduation and two (2) stars in academic performance. Ms. Johnson posed the question about how does the school plan to use the data it has moving forward and Ms. Ahmed asked the question about how this planning includes the current curricula.

Mr. Aviles shared that the current state data is acting as the benchmark for the school. He shared that the school compared their data to school's with similar demographics across the state and while the school was not pleased with the current scores, they were happy to see that the school out performed other similar schools within the state. Mr. Aviles shared that by interviewing the students after the assessment, the school learned that students struggled with utilizing the technology, and the length of the assessment. Mr. Aviles shared that the school's new technology program as well as assessment planning has changed as a result of this feedback. Staff were provided professional development on using the interim assessment tools provided by the Department of Education as well as NWEA MAP assessment tools. This professional development included data-driven instructional techniques.

Mr. Blowman posed the question if the school was able to determine the alignment between SBAC and MAP.

Mr. Aviles shared that the EDEL assessment was not aligned but that the school saw a connection between the growths according to MAP aligned with the growth scores the school received for SBAC.

Mrs. Field Rogers posed a question about how the school was determining growth in Spanish language acquisition.

Mr. Aviles shared that the school found that EDEL program recommended by the state was not sufficient to adequately measure student progress. The school moved to Last Links to show language proficiency for both EL and second language proficiency. The school is also partnering with the ACTFUL Organization dedicated to foreign language acquisition.

Mr. Aviles also reviewed the curricula changes. He shared that adding the bi-lingual tool of new

texts Marividias and Wonders, staff now have a bi-lingual tool and can now focus on instructional planning.

Ms. Baker Sheridan asked if professional development was provided for the Wonders program.

Mr. Aviles shared that a consultant from the Wonders program provided professional development around the link between the Wonders program and the current curricula, as well as best practices between instructional planning and implementation. Jill Lenihan shared how PLC's are also implemented with instructional teams to monitor the progress of instruction as well as student learning. She shared how instructional coaching is also provided in conjunction with interim assessments.

Chuck Taylor asked how the school was utilizing benchmark assessments.

Ms. Lenihan shared that MAP assessments were being used to benchmark and assess all students, and that the Wonders program interim assessments were used along with Dibbles to progress monitor.

Ms. Baker-Sheridan provided the feedback on the school's curriculum submission. This feedback included:

1. The current ELA curricula needs to be aligned to the common core Social Studies standards.
2. The team should review the current math curriculum for alignment to the common core standards.
3. The school should provide a scope and sequence for Social Studies and Science or provide the updated MOU for the coalition(s) as well as the schools method for tracking and reporting the school's participation in the coalition meetings.

Section 3: Organizational Framework

David Blowman summarized the Organizational Performance Framework sharing that the school had met overall organizational performance with some areas where the school was approaching standard.

Ms. Alonso summarized the school's performance reiterating her opening remarks around the school's continuous improvement model that includes all school stakeholders.

Mr. Blowman shared that the school has made continuous improvement over the last few years in the Organizational Performance Framework. He commended the school on its growth in performance and asked the school to share their plan on meeting standard in those areas where they were currently approaching standard.

Governance and Public Stewardship and Special Education. Ms. Alonso stated that the parent representative did not take the necessary training because she was called away to Spain. There is now a board member tracking the CBOC training to make sure all members were trained in a timely fashion. Ms. Simmons, the school's Education Diagnostician, stated that the school did not attain a meets standard rating in special education due to a lack of proper record keeping by a previous employee.

Mr. Taylor asked if there were any outstanding members of the board that needed Financial Training.

Ms. Alonso shared that they have two new board members that will have their training completed before the three month mark required by regulation.

Ms. Johnson posed a question about how the board stays within compliance and utilizes best practice when it comes to governance training.

Ms. Matos shared the DANA training last year. She also shared that the DOE provided training. Ms. Matos also shared that there is on-going board training. Mercedes Alonso then shared that a board training was conducted to learn about board processes, assessment of the board, and additional training to use this data for continuous improvement using a system of action-diagnosis-action model. Ms. Matos shared that a new board member, Celeste Payne, was brought on the board due to her expertise in governance. Ms. Alonso, shared how the Board is using the new process to collect data at the school level to meet the organizational standards.

Mr. Blowman pointed out that the Organizational Performance Framework had changed. Ms. Massett shared how the new more clearly defined standards provide clarity around the measures within the new framework.

Section 4: Financial Framework

Mr. Blowman summarized that the school has met standards in the Financial Performance Framework for the last three years. He posed the question if the areas where the school did not meet standards were directly connected to the improvements made to the facility. He also asked the school to elaborate on the proposed budget moving forward.

The school confirmed that the areas where the school did not meet standard were due to facility improvements. Karen Thorpe discussed the schools budget planning process sharing that the school uses a collaborative process for an effective and successful budget despite the financial constraints. She noted that current enrollment has helped the school to have a quality budget and that the projections include a waterfall enrollment. She shared that the school financially plans using a model that is conservative on revenue and high on projected expenses to ensure that the school remains financially viable. Riccardo Stoeckicht stated that strategic thinking and planning includes both short term and long term planning by creating a capital reserve for future building needs. This approach will be combined with future fund raising plans.

Mr. Blowman asked if the school has identified any capital improvements that could impact the budget in the next three to five years.

Mr. Stoeckicht shared that the school assumes that there will need to be improvements made to HVAC units. He also shared that the school has also taken into account other improvements that could come up unexpectedly. Mr. Stoeckicht shared that it is the goal of the school not to touch the line of credit and other reserve accounts but noted that these financial streams are also available to ensure the financial viability of the school should such a need arise.

Mr. Taylor asked about the school's set aside for the cafeteria program and the school's Title I status.

Mr. Stoeckicht shared that 94% of the school's population receives free lunch and 6% receives aid. He shared that this data is being verified by the DOE. He does not expect a change in the school's current status.

Section 5: Five-Year Planning

The school shared that the next five years will be a continuation of the previous four years. Mr. Aviles shared that the future program includes utilization of more technology within the current school programs to increase student engagement. He shared that the goal of the school is to include additional after-school programs including services for our Latino community. The new transportation system will allow for after school program transportation. The school hopes to offer tutoring for students. The school hopes to be the instructional center for their community including a link with businesses. There school has placed para educators in every kindergarten classroom this year and has a plan grow these supports by grade level over the next five years.

Ms. Alonso shared that the school's united clarified vision for moving forward has, and will continue to, make the future goals a reality. Members of the Board spoke of current examples of how they are supporting this collaborative vision. They shared that they are in initial discussions about expanding the school to include grades sixth through eighth grade.

Mr. Blowman noted that the current renewal application does not include a major modification for expansion and asked the school to elaborate on these plans.

Ms. Alonso shared that the Board is in the process of discussing submitting a major modification in December of 2018 to add a sixth grade program in 2019. This program would eventually serve students in grades sixth through eighth grade. Ms. Alonso shared that Odyssey Charter School has been a wonderful partner to Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School and has shared that there is space on the current campus for a middle school program.

Mr. Blowman noted that there was a jump in enrollment in year four to 627 and then the projected enrollment jumped back down to 600 in year five. He asked for the school to clarify.

Mr. Stoeckicht stated that the decrease was due to the bubble in kindergarten. He believes that the retention in grade levels will equalize the projected enrollment.

Ms. Johnson asked about the data around the EL population. She shared the new accountability system under ESSA. She asked about the benchmark data using WIDA and wanted to know if the school had plans of using WIDA data as a part of the future planning.

Conclusion

Mr. Blowman asked each member if they had any concerns or if there was any additional information that the member required to properly evaluate the school's application.

The following concerns were shared and the following information was requested:

Concern was with alignment of the curricula for science and mathematics. Requested documents are included on pages six (6) through eight (8) of this report. These include:

- Align ELA curricula to common core standards for history and social studies;
- Provide gateways and information about supports for integrated reading;
- Review and resend the scope and sequence for Math aligned to common core standards;
- Provide an updated Social Studies curricula to include common core history and social studies, or current Social Studies Coalition MOU as well as the schools method for tracking and reporting the school's participation in the coalition meetings;
- Provide an updated Science curricula to include common core history and social studies, or current Science Coalition MOU as well as the schools method for tracking and reporting the school's participation in the coalition meetings.

For special education the school needs to continue to work through prong II of their corrective action plan.

A professional development plan that includes how the school will continue to train educators on the standards and a detail of how the school will measure Spanish proficiency.

Next Steps:

- The CSAC will provide the school with an Initial Report no later than October 30, 2017.
- 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 14, 2017.
- The final meeting of the CSAC will be held on November 27; 2nd Floor Cabinet Room, Townsend Building, Dover.
- A second public hearing will be held on December 5; J.W. Collette Building, Conference Rooms A&B, 35 Commerce Way, Dover.
- The public comment period ends on December 8, 2017.

- The Secretary of Education will announce her decision at the December 21, 2017 State Board of Education meeting.