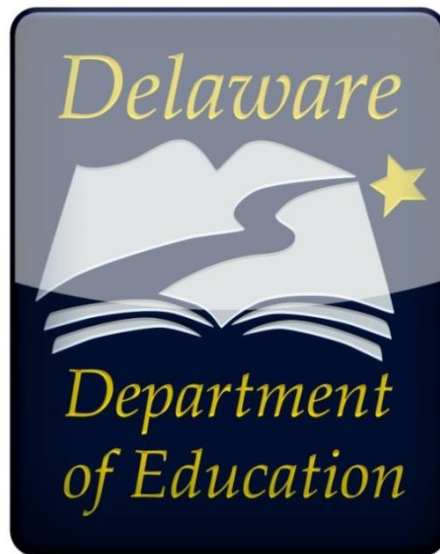


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**Great Oaks Charter School
Wilmington**

**RENEWAL APPLICATION
FINAL REPORT**

CSAC Final Meeting: November 26, 2018
CSAC Final Report Published: December 5, 2018

By September 30, 2018, Great Oaks 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 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 and Performance Agreements and discussion during the CSAC meetings.

The following were in attendance at the Final Meeting of the CSAC on November 26, 2018:

Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- Chuck Longfellow, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee, Associate Secretary, Operations Support, DDOE
- Christine Alois, Deputy Secretary/Performance Support, DDOE
- MaryAnn Mieczkowski, Director, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Amy Baker-Sheridan, Education Associate, Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, DDOE
- Seher Ahmad, Data Analyst, Data Management and Analytics, DDOE
- Chandra Pitts, CEO, One Village Alliance, Community Member
- Chuck Taylor, Retired Head of School, Community Member
- Brian Moore, Program Manager, School Climate and Discipline, DDOE

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Delaware Department of Justice, Counsel to the Committee
- Leroy Travers, Lead Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Finance Office, DDOE
- Sheila Kay-Lawrence, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office DDOE

Ex-Officio Members (Non-voting)

- Audrey Noble, Vice President, Delaware State Board of Education
- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter School Network

Representatives of Charter School

- Michael Maxwell, Board President
- Kia Johnson, Executive Director
- Jordan Jones, Middle School Principal
- Beth Yirga, High School Principal

Discussion

Mr. Longfellow stated that an initial public hearing was held on October 16, 2018 and the Initial CSAC Meeting was held on October 24, 2018. He added that the Initial CSAC Report was issued on November 1, 2018. The school submitted a timely response to the Initial CSAC Report on November 16, 2018.

Mr. Longfellow stated that the purpose of the Final CSAC Meeting was for the CSAC to continue its review of the Renewal Application, probe any areas of concerns through a discussion with the applicant, and to issue a recommendation on the application to the Secretary of Education. A final report would be issued by CSAC before and no later than December 5, 2018.

Mr. Longfellow stated that the CSAC identified the following areas of concern at the Initial CSAC Meeting and requested a response from the school:

Organizational Performance

1. **School Climate:** Provide assurances that all staff have completed the non-academic mandatory training.
2. **Educational Program:** Based on Appendix 1 of CSAC's initial report, containing review notes from DOE's Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development workgroup.
3. **Board Financial Training:** Confirm date when outstanding board member will complete the board financial training.
4. **Teacher Retention:** provide a breakdown by subgroups.
5. **Teacher Professional Development:** provide a distribution of DPAS ratings at the summative and criterion levels and/or a copy of the school's dashboard referenced during the CSAC meeting.

Financial Performance

6. Resubmit the budgets based on 80% and 100% projected enrollments;
7. Submit a budget narrative that aligns to the 80% and 100% budgets
8. Enrollment: submit a plan to increase high school enrollment

Mr. Longfellow asked the CSAC if they had any questions or concerns regarding the school's response relative to organizational performance that required further discussion. Mr. Longfellow noted that the school indicated in its response that Rysheema Dixon, Erica Graves and Kathie Holloway completed the Financial Responsibility Training but there was no record in the Department's online training system to verify that the training was completed. Mr. Longfellow asked the school if they could provide copies of the completion certificates. Ms. Johnson stated that the individuals completed the training together and she promised to provide copies of the certificates. She also noted that Ms. Graves' last name had recently changed. Mr. Longfellow stated that the CSAC will request copies of the certificates. Ms. Massett asked if board members and Citizens Budget Oversight Committee (CBOC) members could complete the online Financial Responsibility Training as a group or individually. Ms.

Hughes explained that the online system is currently set up for each member to register and complete the training individually so that the Department can verify who actually completes the training. Ms. Johnson confirmed that each member logged on to the system and completed the training individually.

Mr. Longfellow asked the CSAC if they had any questions or concerns regarding the school's response relative to financial performance that required further discussion. He noted that the school's 80% budget was based on an enrollment of 460 students but 80% is actually 416 students based on the school's 100% budget which was based on an enrollment of 520 students. Mr. Longfellow noted that the CSAC will request that the school correct the 80% budget to reflect 416 students. Mr. Longfellow underscored the importance of using the 80% budget as an annual planning tool to prepare the school if its enrollment were to unexpectedly decrease below 100%.

Dr. Noble referenced Appendix 6 of the school's response and asked the school to clarify its goals and plans for student enrollment/recruitment. Ms. Johnson stated that the board has established a subcommittee to provide oversight regarding the school's student enrollment/recruitment efforts. She added that Great Oaks has scheduled open house events and recently attended the Public School Choice Expo hosted by the Delaware Charter Schools Network. She also stated that Great Oaks has started building relationships with traditional and charter feeder schools. On November 28, 2018, she added, Great Oaks staff were scheduled to present to students at Charter School of New Castle. She added that "Shadow Days" have been scheduled for the school's current 8th graders as well as the current applicant pool (40 students) to participate as students for a day. Ms. Johnson also stated that a number of former Great Oaks students who withdrew after 8th grade are interested in re-enrolling and they will be invited to participate as students for a day.

Ms. Johnson highlighted the school's "Keeping Families Warm" events which are intended to ensure that applicants who apply during the school choice window, which closes in January, actually show up for school in August and September. The school, she added, hosts monthly engagement opportunities and sends out information about school activities to connect students with the Great Oaks community. Ms. Johnson also stated that a process is in place to track applicants and monitor the enrollment pipeline. Mr. Moore asked the school if the "Keeping Families Warm" events are for applicants only. Ms. Johnson stated that the events are for the entire school but there are separate tracks for applicants and existing students.

Conclusion

Mr. Longfellow noted that the school requested a minor charter modification to decrease its authorized enrollment by 12%. He noted that the Secretary of Education will issue her decision on that modification request.

Mr. Longfellow asked if there were a motion to recommend renewal of the charter of Great Oaks Charter School Wilmington for a 5 year term beginning on July 1, 2019 with the following conditions:

1. By December 10, 2018, the school must provide certificates of completion for the Financial Responsibility Training for Rysheema Dixon, Erica Graves, and Kathie Holloway.
2. By December 10, 2018, the school must provide an updated 80% budget based on the corrected 80% enrollment (416), as noted above.

The motion was made and seconded to recommend approval with conditions and was carried unanimously.

Mr. Longfellow reminded the applicant that the CSAC's recommendation was just that: a recommendation to the Secretary of Education on the renewal application.

Next Steps:

- On or before December 5, 2018, the CSAC will issue a Final Report, which will include its recommendation on the Renewal Application.
- A second public hearing will be held on December 10, 2018; 2nd Floor Cabinet Room, Townsend Building, Dover.
- The public comment period ends on December 14, 2018.
- The Secretary of Education will announce her decision at the December 20, 2018 State Board of Education meeting and seek the assent of the State Board as necessary.