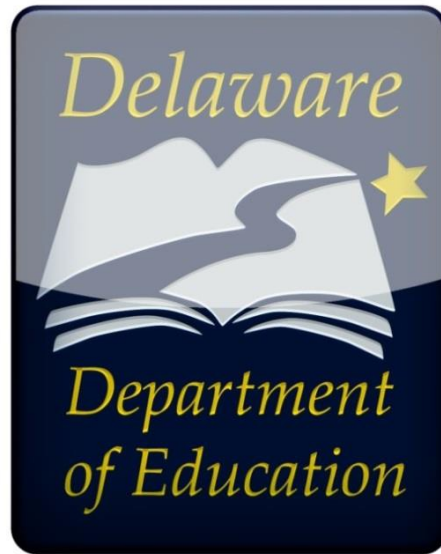


# CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**Great Oaks Charter School  
Wilmington**

**RENEWAL APPLICATION  
INITIAL REPORT**

CSAC Initial Meeting: October 24, 2018  
CSAC Initial Report Published: November 1, 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 during the CSAC meetings.

The following were in attendance at the Initial Meeting of the CSAC on October 24, 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

**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
- Sheila Kay-Lawrence, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office DDOE
- Jennifer Roussel, Administrative Secretary, Operations Support, 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
- Michael Duffy, President, Great Oaks Foundation
- Karen Thorpe, Financial Consultant
- Kendra Giardiniere, Tutor Corps Director
- Jordan Jones, Middle School Principal
- Beth Yirga, High School Principal
- Patrick Ryan, Dean of Students

## Discussion

Mr. Maxwell stated that Great Oaks opened in 2015, growing steadily each year and adding a 9<sup>th</sup> grade class this school year. He introduced a brief video about the school. Following the video, Mr. Maxwell noted that Great Oaks is a tutor-centric educational model that provides the children of Wilmington with opportunities to better themselves through education.

Following the video, Mr. Longfellow noted the following regarding the school's Delaware School Success Framework (DSSF):

- On September 18, 2018, the Charter School Office provided draft DSSF results to the renewing charter schools so that they could complete their renewal applications. The correspondence noted that the data was still draft and schools would be notified if there were any corrections.
- Four of the renewing schools, including Great Oaks Charter School, had corrections to their DSSF data. While Great Oak's overall rating did not change, the rating descriptors associated with the points earned for Academic Achievement, Academic Progress and Student Quality/Student Success changed because of the accountability methodology applied to school year 2017-18 DSSF data.
- The Academic Achievement descriptor changed from "Approaching Expectations" to "Well Below Expectations." The Academic Progress descriptor changed from "Meets Expectations" to "Approaching Expectations." And the Student Quality/Student Success descriptor changed from "Meets Expectations" to "Approaching Expectations."
- For school year 2017-18, the ratings were based on the continuous improvement rating scale which is used for all public school accountability ratings. The draft DSSF data schools received on September 18<sup>th</sup> was based on the static ratings model which was the old accountability methodology used for school year 2016-17. The final DSSF data provided to the renewing charter schools reflects the continuous improvement rating scale.

### **Section 1: Overview**

Mr. Longfellow asked the CSAC if they had any questions or concerns regarding the Overview section of the school's renewal application. There were none.

### **Section 2: Academic Performance**

Mr. Longfellow asked the CSAC if they had any questions or concerns regarding the academic performance section of the school's renewal application. Ms. Baker-Sheridan asked the school to describe how its academic programming has evolved since the charter was approved. Ms. Johnson stated that the most significant evolution has occurred with the school's tutorial

structure. She noted that in the school's founding year which launched with grade 6 and many students entered the school with deficits that were 2-3 grade levels behind. She added that the tutorials were critical to meet the students where they were at and remediate any missing skills to enable students to access grade-level content. Ms. Johnson stated that after the school's first year, an analysis of the student performance data showed that students were still struggling to access grade-level content. These findings, she added, were similar to the challenges seen at other schools in the Great Oaks network which includes locations in Newark, NJ, New York City, and Bridgeport, CT. Ms. Johnson explained that the entire Great Oaks network shifted significantly to make tutorials an extension of the core content classes. She stated that the shift occurred incrementally last year with full rollout this year and the early returns on the investment have been positive based on benchmark data. Ms. Johnson stated that tutors currently work in classrooms with core content teachers and they work in core content teams that include the grade-level chair, the content teachers and the tutors that are assigned to that team. She explained that the content teams meet weekly to create task cards that students use for weekly goal-setting. This system, she added, is also used for school's Tier-2 supports as part of the Response to Intervention (RtI) process. Ms. Johnson introduced Ms. Giardiniere to provide additional information about the evolution of the Tutor Corps.

Ms. Giardiniere stated that the new tutorial structure provides a direct connection between tutorial and the classroom. Teachers, she added, work with second-year Tutor Corps leaders. She explained that Tutor Corps leaders are identified through a selective process. She stated that core content teachers and Tutor Corps leaders meet weekly to discuss what they have observed in the classroom and create a scaffolded task card with bronze, silver, gold and platinum levels based on the content students might be struggling to grasp. Ms. Giardiniere explained that bronze identifies students who have the greatest struggles. The process, she added, empowers the students to own their progress by reviewing weekly progress and setting goals for themselves. She also noted that the students' tasks are divided by content area. Ms. Giardiniere stated that the shift in the tutorial structure has made the Tutor Corps one of the school's greatest assets because the teachers are able to leverage their deep knowledge of the students. Ms. Johnson added that the task cards include a very explicit alignment to the Smarter Balanced achievement levels so that students are aware of how their progress on the task cards translates to performance on the Smarter Balanced assessment.

Ms. Mieczkowski asked the school to describe how they embed specially designed instruction within the instructional process for students with disabilities and align instruction with their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Ms. Johnson referenced the school's task card system and the bronze level, in particular, which is utilized for diverse learners to address their unique needs. She explained that tutors working with students with disabilities will have access to students' IEPs and work with the general education and special education teachers to modify the curriculum based on the students' IEPs. She added that students with more significant needs are pulled out to work in small groups or one-on-one with a special education teacher.

Dr. Noble asked the school to provide additional information regarding the tutors. Ms. Johnson

stated that Great Oaks currently has 60 tutors who are recent college graduates. She also noted that the school works in partnership with the Great Oaks Foundation to recruit the tutors and they represent 22 different cities and another country. She added that for many of the tutors their service at Great Oaks is a gap year and they use the time to figure out the next step in their career paths. She noted that Tutor Corps is an urban education fellowship through the AmeriCorp program and tutors work full-time. The Great Oaks Foundation, she added, has an AmeriCorp grant that provides a living stipend to the tutors. Ms. Johnson noted that the tutors support the school's mission, college success for all, by providing students with opportunities to build relationships with recent college graduates who may be applying to medical school or law school. Mr. Duffy noted that there are 10 applicants for every tutor position. He also noted the diversity of the tutors. The Tutor Corps, he added, also provide the school with a talent pipeline from which the school identifies new teacher candidates. Ms. Johnson noted that Great Oaks partners with Relay Graduate School of Education and this year, there are 15 tutors who are in the process of completing master's degrees in curriculum and instruction and teacher certifications.

Ms. Baker-Sheridan asked the school to describe how they design and organize professional learning to ensure the quality and effectiveness of core content teachers. Ms. Johnson stated that all teachers are assigned an instructional coach and receive formative observations on a weekly basis and receive a deep debrief with their coaches. She added that the administration utilizes a dashboard which captures data for all teachers and their areas for development. Ms. Johnson also noted that the administrative team provides frequent, real-time coaching in the classroom to help teachers adjust instruction. She added that on Fridays students are dismissed at 1:30 p.m. and 2:00 – 4:30 p.m. is used for professional development and for the instructional team to analyze trends and identify professional support needs. Ms. Johnson stated that the Great Oaks Foundation provides access to a menu of professional development options that the school is exchanges resources with other network schools. Ms. Johnson introduced Ms. Jones to provide additional information regarding the school's professional development structure.

Ms. Jones stated that teacher supports are differentiated based on weekly formative observations. For example, she added, if the focus is on the Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS) Component 1: Planning and Preparation, she reviews teacher lesson plans, visits the classroom and meets with the teachers to provide formative feedback. Depending on the areas of growth, she added, some teachers receive from targeted support than others. Ms. Jones also stated that her formative feedback may also include her modeling the instructional skill or methodology. She added that the formative process has help teachers become instructional leaders.

Dr. Ahmad noted that the school has a number of new teachers with 2-3 years of teaching experience, a high percentage with emergency certification as well as out-of-field teachers. She commented that it was helpful to hear the targeted supports provided to teachers and asked the school if they have identified consistent trends/priorities for professional development (e.g.

DPAS-II distribution ratings, etc.) and how they are being addressed. Ms. Jones noted that classroom environment and consistency with classroom routines and procedures are consistently identified as areas for professional development for novice teachers. She added that teachers are grouped based on their professional development needs. For example, she noted, teachers that need help with classroom routines will receive support from the dean of curriculum and instruction. Ms. Jones also noted that teachers receive both individualized and group support. Regarding the proportion of teachers with emergency certifications, Ms. Johnson stated that this is largely due to the educational model which tends to incubate talent from within by identify tutors for teaching positions. There are teachers, she added, who started with Great Oaks when the school opened in 2015 who just completed their certification and master's degrees with the Relay Graduate School of Education. Regarding the use of DPAS ratings, Ms. Jones noted that data is especially useful for supporting novice teachers.

Ms. Pitts commended the school for its investments to support staff which correlate to the school's high teacher retention rate. She asked the school how it ensures a diverse teaching tutor staff that reflects the student demographics, in general, and recruitment of African American male teachers, in particular. Ms. Johnson stated that she is a Wilmington native and commented that it is important that students see themselves reflected in the staff. She added that Great Oaks currently has 7 African American male math and science teachers. She also noted the Tutor Corps provides an additional layer of diversity that reflects the student demographics. Mr. Duffy noted that the tutor pool is currently 70% female and 30% male. He added that the Great Oaks Foundation targets historically Black colleges and universities as a part of its recruitment efforts.

Ms. Mieczkowski asked the school to confirm its current number of special education teachers. Ms. Johnson reported that the school has 4 certified special education teachers and 1 special education teacher who is in the process of completing her certification. She also noted that the school's special education director, Ms. Toronto, also teaches a group of students.

### **Section 3: Organizational Performance**

Mr. Longfellow asked the CSAC if they had any questions or concerns regarding the organizational performance section of the school's renewal application. Mr. Moore noted that the school has a high suspension rate but, based on the school's data, it appears that there are no in-school suspensions. Ms. Johnson stated that the school uses in-school suspensions and she would have to explore why they do not appear in the school's data. Mr. Moore noted that for school year 2017-18 the school listed 358 suspensions, all of which were out of school suspensions. Ms. Johnson requested to review the data since based on the school's restorative model, most of the suspensions should be listed as in-school suspensions because sending students home is not always the best solution. Alternatively, she added, the school utilizes "reverse suspensions" where parents are invited into the school to observe the students. Ms. Yirga stated that the school also uses an internal tracking system that they could cross-reference with the state's data to identify any discrepancies. She added that the school only uses the state

system, eSchoolPlus, to track out of school suspensions which may be the reason for the discrepancies. Ms. Yirga acknowledged that there may have been a misunderstanding regarding reporting requirements. Regarding the school's restorative practices model, Mr. Ryan noted that out of school suspensions are used the least to address discipline issues. Ms. Johnson noted that the school has received restorative practices training from Ramapo which conducted a needs assessment and conducted a full-day training. Ms. Yirga noted that 10 staff members participated in restorative practices training and the Ramapo training is in addition to training provided by the Great Oaks Foundation.

Mr. Moore asked the school if the Ramapo training is for the entire staff or for targeted staff. Ms. Johnson stated that the training is for targeted staff. Mr. Ryan added that Ramapo is scheduled to provide restorative circle training to school administrators, lead teachers and tutor leaders that will equip them to train other staff. He added that Ramapo previously provided a baseline training for non-administrative staff. Ms. Mieczkowski asked the school if they participated in the school climate survey. Ms. Johnson confirmed that they do. Mr. Moore asked the school if they have hired the staff included as part of the state Opportunity grant. Ms. Johnson confirmed that the staff have been hired.

Mr. Moore commended the school for its anti-bullying policy. He noted that his records show that only 3 staff members have completed non-academic mandatory training. Ms. Johnson noted a discrepancy in the data because the entire staff has received the training. Mr. Moore noted that the staff may not be completing the assurance step in the Professional Development Management System (PDMS). Mr. Moore noted that the submitted budget did not appear to include any funding for school climate. Ms. Johnson stated that funding is allocated under the Staff Development and Other: School Operations budget lines.

Dr. Ahmad asked the school to speak to its efforts to retain teachers of color. Ms. Johnson reported that the school's retention rate for teachers of color has been high. She noted that, in general, teachers usually leave a school when there is no room for growth or because they have no voice regarding the direction of the school. However, she added, at Great Oaks there are systems and processes for teachers to provide input and feedback on the school's direction and receive support. She also noted that a quarterly survey is administered to gather staff feedback anonymously. Additionally, Ms. Johnson noted that the school provides leadership opportunities such as teacher mentor roles and the dean apprenticeships that were rolled out this school year. Dr. Ahmad asked the school to share their data.

Mr. Taylor asked the school if all board members are current with board governance training and board/CBOC financial training requirements. Mr. Maxwell reported that all board members have completed the board governance training but one board member has not completed the board financial training.



#### **Section 4: Financial Performance**

Mr. Longfellow provided the following feedback:

- The school's financial performance has improved over the term of the charter. In FY2018, the school met standard on all measures of the Financial Framework report.
- There are no amounts budgeted for Year 0. The school should have completed Year 0 based on FY19 (current year). Please resubmit with Year 0 included.
- There is no budget narrative to accompany the budget sheets. Please submit a budget narrative.
- For school year 2018-19, the school is currently at 84% of approved enrollment (authorized enrollment for this year is 525 students and they enrolled 441 at 9/30/18). Even though the school added a grade level, overall they lost seven students compared to last year's enrollment. The school lost 76 students moving from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade (185 8<sup>th</sup> graders last year to 109 9<sup>th</sup> graders this year). This year's incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade class is smaller (87 this year versus 117 last year). The school might consider enrolling significantly more 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to mitigate potential losses as students transition from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Review 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment projections.

Ms. Johnson noted that this year was the school's first 9<sup>th</sup> grade class and one of the challenges last year was not having a high school that parents could visit. She also reported that 134 of the 180 8<sup>th</sup> grade families indicated that they would re-enroll for 9<sup>th</sup> grade but only 89 returned and many of them were students who wanted to enroll at vocational-technical schools.

#### **Section 5: Five-Year Planning**

Mr. Longfellow asked the CSAC if they had any other comments or questions regarding the Five-Year Planning section of the school's renewal application.

Dr. Noble stated that the school has projected a 54% enrollment increase in 5 years, from 441 to 680. She asked the school to describe the key focus areas to create a successful high school. Ms. Johnson stated that in response to parents who have expressed interest in the early college model, Great Oaks has partnered with Wilmington University to provide opportunities for students as young as 9<sup>th</sup> grade to take college courses. She added that this year's entire 9<sup>th</sup> grade class is enrolled in the "Freshmen Year Experience" course at Wilmington University. Ms. Johnson also stated that if students complete the entire dual-enrollment program, they will graduate with nearly enough credits to enter Wilmington University as a sophomore. Wilmington University, she added, has committed to pay for a summer course, if students commit to attending Wilmington University after graduation. Regarding 9<sup>th</sup> grade recruitment, Ms. Johnson stated that outreach to other schools such as Kuumba is an important component. Ms. Yirga reported that she has been working with the MOT Charter School's founder, Linda Jennings, to develop career and technical education pathways in allied health and teacher preparation as another strategy to recruit 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. She added that Great Oaks is

partnering with Odyssey Charter School and Freire to coordinate across schools and share the opportunities available to students across schools.

Mr. Carwell asked the school to describe any lessons learned from other Great Oaks network schools that have successfully launched a high school. Ms. Yirga stated that the school receives ongoing support from the Great Oaks Foundation. She also noted that the school works with the Great Oaks Bridgeport, CT charter school to share best practices. Mr. Duffy noted that it takes time to develop a reputation. He stated that some of the students who left the school in 9<sup>th</sup> grade have since returned. He also highlighted the Great Oaks charter school in Newark, NJ which only had an initial graduating class of 36 students, with last year's graduating class at 89 students, and this year's class at 110 students. The enrollment, he added, tends to stabilize as the community becomes more familiar with the school. Ms. Johnson noted that the school not only aligns with other Great Oaks network schools but does work that is specific to their local context and landscape.

## Conclusion

Mr. Longfellow asked voting members of CSAC whether there was any additional information that it required to inform its decision-making. The following information was requested:

### Organizational Performance

1. School Climate and Discipline: Provide a plan for compliance with the Non-Academic Mandatory Training requirements for staff (e.g. suicide prevention, bullying prevention, gang awareness, etc.)
2. Educational Program: See Appendix 1 for 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

### Next Steps:

- The CSAC will provide the school with an Initial Report no later than November 1, 2018.
- 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 16, 2018.

- The final meeting of the CSAC will be held on November 26, 2018; 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Cabinet Room, Townsend Building, Dover.
- A second public hearing will be held on December 10, 2018; 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.



# CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

## RENEWALS 2018

GREAT OAKS CHARTER				
Grades	ELA	Math	Science	SS/Hist.
6-9	Partially Meets	Partially Meets	None submitted	None submitted

This document reflects the results of the Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning work group’s review of submitted curriculum material in preparation for the initial meeting of the Charter School Accountability Committee on October 24. We invite you to review the set of Commendations, Recommendations, Expectations to inform future work. While it may appear that there are no changes in curricula during a five-year renewal cycle, there may indeed have been changes that occurred at the national and/or state level. Feedback from the Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Learning workgroup is to ensure that there is a plan for aligning curriculum to the adopted state standards.

The work group requests a response to the Next Steps listed below by November 16 in advance of the final meeting of the Charter School Accountability Committee meeting.

**All Content Areas:** Learning expectations for English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies in grade 9.

**Science:** Evidence that the curriculum is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards adopted by the State of Delaware in 2013 (i.e. a lesson from each grade level) and/or a signed Delaware Science Coalition Memorandum of Agreement.

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**Delaware Department of Education: Academic Support Team**

**Charter Renewal Curriculum Review**

**School:** Delaware Design Lab Charter School

**Date:** 10/31/18

**English/Language Arts:**

Great Oaks uses Springboard 2014 edition for instructional materials.

Overall Evaluation:(select one by highlighting yellow)

- Meets expectations
- Partially meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations

Commendations:

- Texts are worthy of students' time and attention: texts are of quality and are rigorous, meeting the text complexity criteria for each grade. Materials support students' advancing toward independent reading.
- Students have many opportunities to read broadly and deeply through independent reading and in-class text assignments.
- Year-long writing instruction provides students guided support over the course of the school year so students get practice writing on-demand and multi-draft texts.
- Materials provide a design, including accountability, for how students will regularly engage in a volume of independent reading either in or outside of class.
- Materials include explicit instruction of the grammar and conventions standards for grade level as applied in increasingly sophisticated contexts, with opportunities for application both in and out of context.

Recommendations:

- Facilitate rich and rigorous evidence-based discussions and writing about common texts through a sequence of specific, thought-provoking, and text dependent questions. Some questions and tasks are text-dependent, requiring some evidence from texts, but they are inconsistently applied in the rich texts under study. Sequences of questions do not consistently support completion of rich culminating tasks that grow knowledge and allow students to demonstrate deep understanding of the texts .
- Focus on building students' academic vocabulary in context throughout instruction. There is a structure to develop students' vocabulary, but words are not consistently used context and mostly are centered around literary and writing terms in service of writing exercises.

Expectations:

- Provide all students with multiple opportunities to engage with text of appropriate complexity for the grade level; include appropriate scaffolding so that students directly experience the complexity of the text.
- Integrate appropriate supports in reading, writing, listening, and speaking for students who are ELL, have disabilities, or read well below the grade level text band.
- Provide extensions and/or more advanced text for student who read well above the grade level text band.

**Math:**

Engage New York math curriculum. No curriculum documents provided other than identifying the curriculum used.

Overall Evaluation:(select one by highlighting yellow)

- ↓ Meets expectations
- ↓ **Partially meets expectations**
- ↓ Does not meet expectations

Commendations:

- Engage New York targets grade-level CCSS Mathematics standards

Recommendations:

- Consider how day to day plans demonstrate experiences for students' conceptual understanding of the CCSS math standards.
- Provide evidence of students demonstrating the standards of mathematical practice.
- Provide evidence that demonstrates how a balance of mathematical procedures and deeper conceptual understanding is provided to students.

Expectations:

- Evidence of addressing instructional expectations and assessments
- Include and consider ways in which students are demonstrating the standards of mathematical practice as central to lessons.
- Include lessons and learning experiences addressing the identified big ideas for each course, providing students with extensive work at grade-level problems. No documents were provided.
- Address lesson / unit assessments and evidence of students mastering standards-based content. Include aligned rubrics and scoring guidelines.

