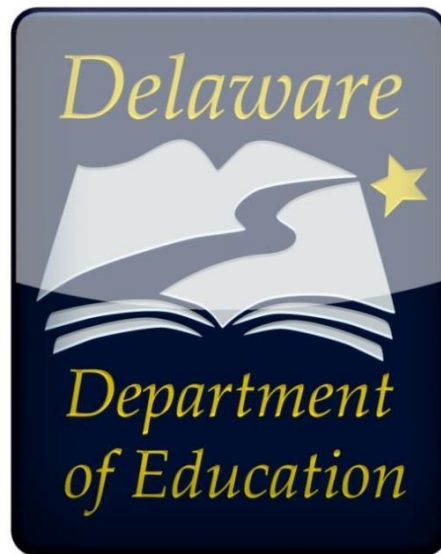


# CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## Kuumba Academy Charter School

**RENEWAL APPLICATION  
INITIAL REPORT**

CSAC Initial Meeting: October 24, 2018  
CSAC Initial Report Published: November 1, 2018

By September 30, 2018, Kuumba Academy 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 and Associate Secretary, Operations Support, DDOE
- Christine Alois, Deputy Secretary/Performance Support, DDOE
- Amy Baker Sheridan, Education Associate, Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, DDOE
- Mary Ann Mieczkowski, Director, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Brian Moore, Program Manager, School Climate and Discipline, DDOE
- Seher Ahmad, Educator Effectiveness, DDOE
- Chandra Pitts, CEO, One Village Alliance, Community Member
- Chuck Taylor, Retired Head of School, Community Member

**Ex-Officio Members (Non-voting)**

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

**Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)**

- Catherine T. Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Delaware Department of Justice, Counsel to the Committee
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE
- Sheila Kay-Lawrence, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Jennifer Roussel, Administrative Secretary, Operations Support, DDOE

**Representatives of Charter School**

- Joan Coker, Board President
- Sally Maldonado, Head of School
- Samantha Connell, Director of Instruction
- Ayanna Johnson, School Principal
- Michelle Lambert, Financial Consultant
- Raye Jones Avery, Board Member
- Linda Jennings, MOT Charter School, Head of School

## Discussion

The school presented a brief video highlighting the programs of the school and the activities of the students. 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 had corrections to their DSSF data. Kuumba Academy did not have any corrections.
- 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.

Ms. Maldonado explained that the school would like to continue to serve the students. The school has undergone a rapid expansion in recent years. It is a school with a heart and it is dedicated to helping students achieve their goals. The school helps many from disadvantaged backgrounds. Kuumba Academy Charter School's mission is to provide an innovative learning environment for the whole child from kindergarten through eighth grade. The school believes that parents are essential in the education of children. The school leaders and teachers seek to enter into a partnership with the parents so that every child can fulfill their potential.

Ms. Coker said that Kuumba has an active student body with a current enrollment of 662. The educators go out and visit every family to maintain connectivity to the school. Kuumba is excited about their new principal, Ms. Johnson, who will help Ms. Connell in the area of instruction. As a result, it is expected that Kuumba's performance will greatly improve in the future.

### **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 referred to the Delaware School Success Framework and noted that there had been real improvements since the last report in 2016-17. He stated that the ratings for academic achievement have improved and that is welcomed. However, there was still room for improvement and the representatives of the charter school agreed that this was the case. After a presentation and overview of the school, Mr. Longfellow, Chairperson of CSAC, asked the

members if had they any questions for the representatives of Kuumba.

Ms. Sheridan asked how the academics have improved, seeking information about specific strategies that were taken by the school leaders to improve the academic framework. The head of school, Ms. Maldonado, stated that the school had made many changes to its curriculum and how it taught core subjects. The arts integration model is now very important for Kuumba and it is helping the students to improve academically. This is an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. It is not just about teaching arts, but also about helping children to learn more through art. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject and they meet evolving objectives. Kuumba is now an Expeditionary Learning or EL school. EL offers the education that educates the whole child: one that prepares citizens with both the skills and the character necessary for success throughout college, work, and life. This has helped to improve the standards in the school. They are now helping the teachers to implement EL but also helping them to teach the curriculum, including common core standards.

Ms. Maldonado continued, stating that the school is very concerned with their teachers building upon the common core standards. These are very important in the academic achievement of the school. The common core subjects are now being measured much more effectively than in the past and it is allowing the school to better monitor the progress of students. However, the school has gone beyond this and is now committed to using interim data as well. This allows the school to identify those who may need support and extra help; it will help the student body to reach the standards that have been set.

Ms. Connell added that the focus was now on data-driven instruction; instruction that is based on the data developed by monitoring the students. Data is studied, and feedback is provided to the teachers. The teachers meet in teams to discuss the data and collaborate on ways to improve the teaching. There is now an emphasis on digging deeper into improving instructional practices. The curriculum was reviewed and expanded and there was a decision taken to engage the students more with the curriculum. Learning expeditions was one strategy that was utilized to bring learning alive to students. This, of course, does not mean that the traditional school environment was neglected.

Ms. Sheridan asked how the school supported students with special needs and gifted students. She inquired as to those who need special supports as they are at risk of not meeting standards as well as those who are exceptional students and need to be challenged.

Ms. Maldonado replied that the school supports the diverse learning needs of all students, which is important given the background of many of them. Ms. Maldonado stated that her team has really worked well with Setting B and the special needs education of students were met through Setting A. There was a strategy of modifying the curriculum to give Kuumba's students the opportunity to learn.

Ms. Mieczkowski raised questions as to the modification of the school curricula and how that

was done. Ms. Maldonado explained that the school curricula had been scaffolded to meet the needs of the students. She added that this was important to meet the needs of the students with special needs and those with exceptional abilities within Setting B. Ms. Mieczkowski then asked that KACS correct this language in the application to indicate added scaffolding to the curriculum within setting B as opposed to modifying the curricula within setting B. Ms. Maldonado agreed that scaffolding is part of the school's support for special education students and recognized the need to correct this language within the application to replace modified with scaffolded curricula.

Ms. Maldonado stated that the school has hired a guidance counselor. This will help the school to better support those students who have special education needs and help the teachers to identify those who are not identified using traditional tests. Ayanna Johnson, school principal, stated that the data in relation to special needs students is now monitored. Teachers meet as a team to monitor and discuss the data. The teaching staff meet on a regular basis about the students' needs, which will help to better support the students with some special needs.

Ms. Mieczkowski asked the representatives of Kuumba to talk about the multi-tiered system of supports, with reference to Special Education students. Ms. Johnson stated that the system of multi-tiered supports was in place throughout the school. This is a system that rewards good behavior and effort. They are measured based on the tier and how students deal with challenging situations and their general behavior in the class and elsewhere. Kuumba has a behavior interventionist, who works with the children that need extra support and helps them. The behavior interventionist is an expert that helps children, especially with coping skills, so when they are under pressure they can cope. This work leads to better overall behavior and helps students when it comes to conflict resolution. As a result, students who have difficulty coping with conflicts can resolve them without behaving in ways that are not acceptable. Ms. Maldonado explained that character habits and habits of scholarship are integrated into curriculum and practice, which is also helpful in supporting children who may have some issues or problems.

Ms. Mieczkowski asked the representatives of Kuumba if the school took part in the school climate survey. The survey helps school leaders to understand the students' views on the learning environment. Ms. Maldonado said that they did not and that Kuumba used an internal school survey. Ms. Mieczkowski asked for detail about the school survey. Ms. Maldonado explained that as part of the Expeditionary Learning (EL) network, there is a survey and is taken by EL schools. The questions on the EL survey include: do the students feel supported and do students feel safe? It was agreed that this survey was similar to the school climate survey.

Ms. Sheridan asked how Kuumba organizes and improves instructional learning. Ms. Maldonado explained that at present Kuumba is aligning Professional Development by looking at best practices in the school, looking at high-quality work, and the achievement of standards. There is a PD plan in place and this is designed to help teachers make progress in their instruction. The school recognizes that some of Kuumba's staff who are not familiar with some of the teaching approaches may need more EL support. Therefore, the school provides ongoing

coaching, such as mentoring, etc.

Ms. Connell added that there is an effort to align the professional development of the teachers with the needs of the students, which helps the school make progress. The approach to professional development is one where the needs of the students are matched to the development of the teachers. The aim of the professional development is to help the teachers build strong characters in the students and enable the students to develop high-quality work.

Ms. Maldonado stated that when the team meets, they analyze the data. She believes that the school needs to have a better relationship with parents who should be the school's partners in education. When they look at the data, they focus on areas such as reading. When the data is reviewed, the school factors in the parent's relationship with the child as one means of potentially increasing achievement. This approach has been a challenge as the school has gone from 298 students to 662 students. The school believes that the student's data can be improved if the families feel connected. To achieve this, Kuumba has worked with the Springboard program. This has led to the introduction of guided reading supports, which includes ways to get the parents involved in instruction. It can be very challenging to get the parents to support children. A significant focus of the PD was how to get parents to come in every week and how to make the most of the home visits, so that the students can get the support of their parents?

Ms. Connell said in the past year Kuumba worked hard on the issue of teacher buy-in. Kuumba sought to achieve this by letting the teachers develop their own PD goals. This buy-in by teachers means that they are more likely to help the students to achieve their goals. The focus is on self-development. The teacher develops themselves and this is showing up in the academic achievement of Kuumba's students. The teachers are supported in their self-development by coaches. The coaches make sure that the teachers' goals are actionable so that they can be implemented.

Ms. Ahmad asked about Kuumba's teacher induction program. Ms. Maldonado said that Kuumba has introduced a new teacher induction program, which is important for the performance of the new staff and for teacher retention. Ms. Connell said that Kuumba gives new teachers mentors. The mentors help the new teachers in many ways and in little things such as how to take attendance or how to pick up students from dance class. This helps the new teachers adapt to Kuumba.

Ms. Pitts asked about the educator climate. Ms. Pitts noted that it looks as if the teacher corps is as diverse as Kuumba's demographics and this was very good and even praiseworthy. Ms. Pitts asked what retention strategies Kuumba used to retain the best teachers. Ms. Maldonado stated that it was something that was always on the minds of the school board and its leadership. They are always looking for teachers who represent the school's students and families. As a result, they were continuously seeking to build partnerships. Kuumba has reached out to Wilmington University and the University of Delaware. Regarding teacher retention, Ms. Coker said that Kuumba met with the teachers who were leaving and asked them their reasons for leaving. Based on what was said, Kuumba made changes and added some interventions.

Ms. Maldonado noted that Kuumba gives teachers a voice on the curriculum they teach and on teacher evaluations. Kuumba now offers greater opportunities on how to improve instructional coaching. This makes teachers feel valued and is having a greater impact on teacher satisfaction.

Ms. Pitts asked if there were an issue of low levels of re-enrollment and what it might mean for the future of the school. Ms. Coker responded that re-enrollment was not a problem because they wanted to keep the ratio as low as possible. The ratio is 1 teacher to 22 students and is more manageable for teachers. Kuumba recognizes that they cannot chase numbers for dollars and Kuumba is more interested in the quality of its teaching and making an impact on its students. Dr. Noble then noted that retention is very important and that it has decreased in the past three years and especially in relation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Dr. Noble asked if the school had considered any 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade retention policies. Ms. Maldonado noted that Kuumba is always looking for additional supports. It added another reading specialist this year to help improve student retention.

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

Mr. Longfellow then turned the discussion to the Organizational Framework. Mr. Moore asked about fire drills and how they were organized. He then turned to the issue of the opportunity grant and its use in connection with the discipline data. He was concerned that there were no recorded instances of school suspensions. He asked if Kuumba had a policy on suspensions. Ms. Maldonado answered that Kuumba now has a character development classroom. The behavior interventionist manages the room and character education classes are provided. Mr. Taylor noted that the various board members went for Board Training and CBOC training. Kuumba still has board members who are missing their CBOC training. Ms. Maldonado stated that they had training with DANA over the summer and all members are currently trained.

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

Mr. Longfellow provided the following feedback:

- In recent years, the school has struggled with the total margin and cash flow measures of the Financial Framework report. This is mostly due to a large grant the school received and spent over a three-year period (FY16-FY18). Overall, the school has met standard during the course of the charter term.
- Review and revise the school's budget projections. The budget reflects no increases in salary over Years 1-4. The State & Local Funds budget appears to a copy and paste from year to year. The school has not budgeted any increases in operating expenses from year to year so it artificially inflates the ending balances and subsequent carryover amounts. The school projects going from a \$615k surplus this year to a \$3.0 million surplus in year 4.
- Submit a revised budget based on 80% enrollment.

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



Kuumba will continue with the Teaching Excellence Framework to support their teachers' professional growth and development. New strategies to evaluate teachers will be implemented. The goals of Kuumba will be to improve students' academic performance and teacher retention. Student learning will be the center of any changes to the school and policies. The school is working to develop a culture where teachers can learn and self-develop. A space needs to be created where educators can support each other in development. Kuumba will increase cooperation with the community and especially parents to raise the academic achievement level of the students.

## **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. Educational Program: Submit the Body Safety Curriculum; where is the school in selecting this curriculum and when the school will approve this curriculum.
2. Educational Program: See Appendix 1 for review notes from DOE's Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development workgroup.
3. Students with Disabilities: Reword Setting B to make the curriculum rigorous and have appropriate accommodations.

### **Financial Performance**

4. Resubmit the revised 100% Budget with any changes or additions
5. 80% budget projections:

NOTE: For both the 100% and 80% Budget: reflecting inflationary factors, enrollment projections, increasing cost for rent/lease, etc.

### **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, Department of Education, 401 Federal Street, Dover DE 19901.
- 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

KUUMBA ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL				
Grades	ELA	Math	Science	SS/Hist.
6-8	Meets	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 has no additional requests of Positive Outcomes Charter School in advance of the final meeting of the Charter School Accountability Committee meeting.

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

**Charter Renewal Curriculum Review**

**School:** Kuumba Academy Charter School

**Date:** 10/31/18

**English/Language Arts:**

Overall Evaluation:(select one by highlighting yellow)

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

Commendations:

- The school has adopted the Expeditionary Learning curriculum resources. This resource is rated highly aligned to state English Language Arts/Literacy standards.

Recommendations:

- Send a representative to monthly Literacy Cadre and/or Literacy Coalition Meetings
- When planning – layer questioning routines and practices on to reading routines to maximize the impact of text dependent questions.
- Support [professional development](#) regarding the design of an effective independent/choice reading program that promotes reading for enjoyment. The implementation of classroom libraries will assist in this endeavor.

Expectations:

- Ensure teachers plan and deliver lessons around Tier 2 high utility words.
- Engage students in supported reading structures during reading in class. Reading routines such as [reading guides, partnered reading, and reciprocal teaching can provide comprehension support while still asking students to do the reading themselves.](#)
- Ensure students are writing every day in every content area for a variety of purposes, tasks, and audiences. Lessons often have students engaged in writing centered around text. Be sure students are also engaged in larger writing tasks that encompass the full depth and breadth of the writing standards. .

## Math:

Overall Evaluation:(select one by highlighting yellow)

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

Commendations:

- The school has adopted Eureka Math, which is a highly rated resource per Ed Reports and aligned to Delaware State Standards.

Recommendations:

- Send a representative to monthly Math Cadre meetings. In addition, attend any state-wide Eureka trainings for continued growth in working with the Eureka program.
- There is a curriculum map included in the Eureka resource. It outlines units by standard and provides a suggested number of days (170-180). Construct grade level pacing guides to guide teachers by incorporating some "flex days" where teachers are able to reteach or extend concepts. The Eureka schedule does not allow for much flexibility.
- Include Tier 2 and Tier 3 resources in a curriculum guidance document. As per [Ed Reports, Eureka provides limited scaffolding and strategies for clarifying misconceptions or for reteaching](#). Consider using the CRA (concrete-representational-abstract) approach to support conceptual understanding (noted in DDOE site visit report.)
- Note that usability for Grades 6-8 is rated yellow in [Ed Reports. Areas such as questioning, use of technology, scaffolding concepts, and formative/summative assessments should be addressed in a curriculum guidance document to support teachers.](#)

Expectations:

- Provide guidance documents for bringing the Standards for Mathematical Practice "to life." Eureka has these practices embedded in the program, however, as noted in the DDOE site visit report, teachers need to make these practices visible.