

Gregory R. Meece, Sr.
School Director

200 McIntire Drive
Newark, DE 19711



T: 302.369.2001

F: 302.369.7438

www.NewarkCharterSchool.org

EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMICS AND DECORUM

November 8, 2018

Dr. Chuck Longfellow
Associate Secretary, Operations Support
Delaware Department of Education
401 Federal Street, Suite #2
Dover, DE 19901-3639

Dear Dr. Longfellow

Thank you and the members of the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) for meeting with us on October 25 and for providing the Renewal Application Initial Report, published November 1. We were happy to discuss with the CSAC members the positive results achieved by the school, especially as they relate to the Academic, Organizational and Financial Frameworks.

The Conclusion section of the Initial Report included two specific requests for additional responses from the school. You will find these answers below.

The students, staff, parents and Board of Directors at Newark Charter School have worked hard to earn your consideration of a 10-year renewal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gregory Meece". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and "M".

Gregory R. Meece
School Director

Copy: Mr. John Carwell, Charter Schools Office
Dr. Frank Newton, NCS Board Chairman

CSAC Request #1

10-Year Charter: Provide a narrative on the school's justification for 10-year versus a 5-year charter renewal.

School's Response

The charter law was changed to include the following provision: "Where a charter school has demonstrated an outstanding record of performance, an approving authority may grant it a renewal term of 10 years." Extending the renewal period serves as a reward for schools that have demonstrated a strong track record, and it incentivizes other charter schools to rise to this standard. In the case of Newark Charter School, we have demonstrated a strong track record, and we have continued to rise to even greater heights.

A 10-year renewal is justified because our school has met and surpassed the agreed-upon standards required for such as renewal. These are just a few examples of how Newark Charter School has "demonstrated an outstanding record of performance."

- Already completed three successful charter renewals, showing consistently positive results
- Met 100% of all the standards on the Financial Framework every year
- Met 100% of all the standards on the Organizational Framework every year, including a perfect score of 100 out of 100 possible points on the 2018 rubric.
- Exceeded 100% of the standards on the Academic Framework (DSSF).
- 100% of our graduates accepted into colleges and universities all over the country, last two years
- Achieved capacity enrollments every year, with the largest waiting list for any Delaware charter or choice school.
- First Delaware charter school to be named a National Blue Ribbon School (named twice)
- Cited by the Department of Education as a Superior School, Reward School, Recognition School, School of Continued Excellence and a National Distinguished Title I School.

A 10-year renewal is also justified because evidence of stability provides assurance and confidence to financial lending agencies. This can result in lower interest rates and, therefore, more funds that can be redirected to the classroom. Financing debt is the school's second largest expense (after salaries and benefits). Charter schools do not receive capital funding. Newark Charter School has depended upon bond financing to pay for its buildings. The school has refinanced these loans to achieve better interest rates. CSAC members at the renewal meeting asked the school how it plans to address a significant market demand. Any future expansions to provide increased access to the school's successful program will be supported by a 10-year renewal.

When Newark Charter School applied for its last renewal (2013), the school was told that it wasn't considered for a 10-year renewal, which had recently been permitted, because the Department of Education had not yet had time to consider all aspects of this new provision of the law. Subsequently (in 2017) the Department awarded a 10-year renewal to Sussex Academy. Newark Charter School and Sussex Academy are similarly-situated charter schools in terms of age and track record.

Finally, a 10-year renewal for Newark Charter School will give newer or struggling charter schools an incentive to demonstrate an outstanding record of performance in the future, and an assurance that their results will be considered in future renewals. As always, Newark Charter School staff and Board are happy to assist any other charter schools to achieve success and an opportunity to qualify for a 10-year renewal.

CSAC Request #2

Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development: 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. a. All Content Areas: Please submit a plan describing the school's process for reviewing and revising curriculum to ensure instruction is aligned to the adopted state adopted standards for the next 10 years.

School's Response

Newark Charter School is committed to continued excellence in academics. We ensure that all staff members are carefully on-boarded and trained in the power of the Core Knowledge curriculum and are paired with expert teachers to collaborate and deliver the Core Knowledge curriculum scope and sequence, dovetailed with the Common Core Standards in grades Kindergarten through eighth grades. At the high school level the Common Core Curriculum is delivered along with Advanced Placement courses that include the AP Capstone Program. All AP teachers attend AP trainings and are a part of the collaborative network for AP teachers.

Since its inception, Newark Charter leadership has ensured that the faculty maintains fidelity to the approved curriculum, and has ensured that curricula evolve as standards changed. A great example of this work is the shifts in curriculum that have occurred with the Next Generation Science Standards. Through participation in the Science Coalition, our teacher representative partnered with administration to lead a re-alignment of the Core Knowledge curriculum to align with the NGSS. Teachers from kindergarten through twelfth grade collaborated to make these shifts, moving topics across grade levels and even changing the high school course sequence to ensure our students were best prepared. We leveraged our relationship with the University of Delaware's Professional Development Center for Education and partnered with their staff to support our teachers in the adoption of the NGSS standards. Newark Charter is committed to continue to ensure fidelity to the Core Knowledge curriculum, as a part of our charter, and to align with state-adopted standards as they evolve and change. In the future, Newark Charter will use this process when additional curricular changes occur at the state and national levels.

Newark Charter will continue to collaborate and stay connected with leaders across the state, at the DEDOE and in districts. Newark Charter will continue to participate in the Communication and Collaboration Network, formerly known as the Teaching and Learning Cadre. NCS Leadership reviews all agendas in advance and attends meetings as appropriate, and reviews minutes and other information posted in the Schoology group. Newark Charter will continue participation in the Science Coalition, Social Studies Coalition, Math Coalition & Cadre, Literacy Coalition & Cadre, World Language Teacher Leadership network and the CTE Coalition. Our administrators and educators are committed to continued growth and will continue to attend conferences and take course work to remain experts in the field and to grow as the landscape changes. NCS Leadership will continue to lead teacher collaboration and reflection on student performance on standardized assessments and provide responsive instruction accordingly. Partnership and collaboration with higher education and community partners will also continue to ensure connectedness in our curriculum for students as they transition to college and careers. Internally, professional development takes place in common planning times, morning meetings, after school sessions, during faculty meetings, scheduled professional development days and in the summer through work groups. These efforts are connected and aligned with approved curricula and best practices.

Our administrators and instructional staff maintain membership in their professional organizations. Yearly, we support participation in the state-wide professional development day to include not only core content area sessions but for the visual and performing arts, health and physical education. Through these organizations, educators value professional growth through the review of periodicals, discipline specific professional development and being a part of a network of professionals sharing best practices. Newark Charter supports staff to attend and participate in professional development aligned with their instructional and/or professional responsibilities.