



SUSSEX ACADEMY

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May 9, 2017

Ms. Denise Stouffer
Delaware Department of Education
401 Federal Street
Dover, DE 19901 -3639

Dear Ms. Stouffer:

Thank you for the Charter Renewal Report of April 30, 2017. We want to thank the Charter School Office for its informative summary of the status of our school provided through the report. We also wish to thank your office for what was a welcomed site visit where the Charter office staff could see and chat with many of our students and teachers.

Our school's story is one of massive change and transition since the last charter renewal. We moved from a building that housed 330 students to one which has the capacity to house 800 students. In June 2013 we physically moved the school to 21150 Airport Road in Georgetown. Since that time we added 29 classrooms including five science laboratories, locker rooms, a library, a cafetorium, office spaces, a multipurpose room, and restrooms. In addition, we added major athletic fields including two synthetic turf fields, and a softball field. We are in the process of completing a concession stand with lavatory facilities and a health station. A major Sussex County business built and donated a swimming pool for both our school and community use. These additions to the physical complex are important to our over all school programs.

Our school's story is heightened through the continued high performance of our middle school students and the addition of our high school academic program. Over the last four years we have built our courses of study with the International Baccalaureate Diploma program as our benchmark. This means a necessary review of our mission, goals, instructional focus, and instructional model. We continue to align our curriculum to the Common Core State Standards while ensuring that our academic outcomes move students toward enrolling and succeeding in IB courses during their junior and senior years. With this emphasis, we want all students, grades 6-12, to acquire the attributes of the IB Learner Profile.

Sussex Academy Responses to 2017-2018 Renewal Report

There are four sections to the 2017-2018 Renewal Report. We offer Responses to that Report below.

I. Overview

1. 2 Enrollment and Demographic Information

Sussex Academy has increased its student diversity over the past three years such that the Hispanic student enrollment has moved from 0.4% to 12.7%. Our Board's Outreach Committee uses multiple strategies to engage under represented populations.

Seahawks

1.4 & 1.5 School Enrollment and School Reenrollment

Over the last four-year period enrollment trends have been stable ranging between 90%-94%. Initially as we began our high school, we had more difficulty in retaining our grade 8 students and attracting new ninth grade students. So the data show a decreased attrition rate from 71% to 27% of our grade 8 students. As our high school has evolved with athletics, clubs, and other features, our enrollment has grown each year. Now we are experiencing what we thought all along – that students would chose our school for its academic focus and its school climate. Thus, over the past four years we have experienced a reenrollment increase from 68% in 2013-2014 to nearly 86% in 2016-2017. Our May 1, 2017 total school enrollment is 96% of the approved enrollment in our last charter renewal.

II. Academic Performance

2.1 – 2.7 Overall Academic Ratings

While Sussex Academy consistently has met academic and proficiency ratings, the school achieved a five-star rating in school year 2015-2016 on all achievement metrics. We were recognized as a national Blue Ribbon School for school year 2014-2015. Also we have been recognized twice as a Rewards School by the Delaware Department of Education. In September 2016, we were recognized by Niche.com and startclass.com (reported on MSN.com) as the number 1 middle school in Delaware for 2015-2016. Also, we received the Small Rural School Achievement Award by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In summary, academic performance and achievement is a goal held by all stakeholders – students, parents, faculty, administration, board - in the Sussex Academy community.

III. Organization Framework

Sussex Academy has met all standards of the Organizational Framework since its implementation in 2011-2012.

IV. Financial Framework

Sussex Academy is now and always has been financially viable. With the exception of the 2013-2014 fiscal year, the school has had a budgetary surplus annually. The move-related expenses and unanticipated facility repairs at our new location resulted in our need to use \$90,000 in reserve funds to balance the FY14 school budget. As of June 30, 2016, our total cash assets in reserve were \$1,986,710. As previously discussed in I. 1.4 & 1.5, we are experiencing enrollment and retention rates that move us toward the 95% threshold target identified in the Financial Framework as a near-term indicator of financial viability.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information and responses to the Renewal Report of April 30, 2017. Sussex Academy looks forward to submitting our application for renewal by September 30, 2017.

Sincerely,



Patricia S. Oliphant, Ed. D.
Director