



# Academy of Dover Charter School

"A Small School with a Big Vision"

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Mrs. Cheri Marshall, Principal

Mr. Gene Capers, Assistant Principal

November 2, 2016

David Blowman, Deputy Secretary  
Department of Education  
Charter School Accountability Committee  
Townsend Building  
401 Federal Street, Suite 2  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Mr. Blowman,

Academy of Dover would like to thank you for the opportunity to discuss our Renewal Application with the entire CSAC on October 11, 2016. We would like to take this opportunity to respond to several concerns cited in the CSAC Initial Report, dated October 17, 2016.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cheri Marshall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cheri Marshall  
Head of School

**1. *Provide a list of activities AOD has historically used for student recruitment and retention. Provide a list of new activities and a calendar/timeline.***

Historically, Academy of Dover has done the following to recruit students for the upcoming school year:

- The Head of School conducts weekly school tours for any parents interested in AOD. The parents get a tour of the school and learn about the schools overall program of the school at the same time. After the tour, parents are then handed a registration packet. The Head of School explains the one year commitment, uniform policy, and all other information contained in the packet and answers any questions the parents may have. Any parents who contact the school via phone or applying through the school choice website are encouraged to participate in this informational session and tour. Tours are usually scheduled every Tuesday at 1:30 or by appointments.
- Head Start used to take a field trip to AOD every spring. During this time the students and their parents would tour the school and then meet with the kindergarten students and teachers about what the day looks like for a kindergartner. They would end with an activity in the classroom that they could take back with them. In past years this has been successful. Parents who came with the students would receive an application packet and many of them would sign up immediately. Over the last couple years, we have seen a decrease in the amount of parents who participate in this trip with the Head Start students. Last year only 3 parents came with the 30 students and 6 teachers. This was not as effective as it had been. AOD took the initiative to go to Head Start and talk to parents during one of their monthly parent nights. One administrator and one kindergarten teacher participated in that event and handed out brochures and registration packets.
- During the spring of 2016, school representatives dropped off brochures to all the local child care facilities and even did some presentations at the daycares for families.
- AOD holds a week long open registration night each spring. Advertisements went out for several weeks leading up to the event. Last spring, AOD had a really low turnout for the event and only registered three families.
- AOD advertises in both the Dover Post and the DE State News. This has not been effective in the past.
- AOD participated in the DAFB recruiting night. There were several schools set up at the event and there was a very low turnout.
- AOD participated in the back to school Block Party with local churches in August 2016. Several registration packets and brochures/pens/cups were distributed at the event.

Each time a family comes to register their child or participate in a school tour, they are always asked how they heard about the Academy of Dover. The biggest response we get is that they have a friend or relative that has students attending, or word of mouth. Other parents state they just rode by and saw the school and stopped by. Taking this into account, we have put a plan in place to do the following:

- The school's Recruitment Committee will continue to meet every two months to discuss recruiting efforts. The committee will provide ideas/suggestions on how to recruit as well as sign up for different events. They will be kept informed of the enrollment numbers and determine what next steps are.
- In August of 2016, AOD's technology teacher created and manages the AOD Facebook (FB) page. In order to get more people to "like" the FB page, the school will be doing contests for a chance

to win prizes. Through this FB page, the school will post weekly student of the weeks, photos from field trips/classroom activities, special announcements, etc.

- AOD is planning to start a new program called “Step Right into Kindergarten”. This program will be held three times over the year (Nov-April). During this time, kindergarten teachers will work with the students on an activity in the classrooms while the parents are meeting for an informational session with administration. The school hopes that this program will attract families from Smyrna to Milford areas. The school will work with a local company to produce a brochure to go out in a mass mailing. The company has already been contacted and the school administration is working to set up a meeting. The cost of the brochures will come out of the budgeted advertisement allotment.
- AOD is in the process of getting a Parent Teacher Organization up and running. The PTO has been meeting monthly since August. In November, elections will take place for executive chair holders. The school hopes to use the PTO as a way to recruit in the community. They will work on fundraising and recruiting opportunities, such as setting up a booth outside of local shops around the area. The first one is already scheduled at Sam’s Club in November.
- AOD will continue to increase its personal contacts within the community through church events, parent nights at child care centers, and advertisement through the public housing authority to name a few. The timeline for this will be January - May.
- One of the parents at AOD has a Marketing background and has met with administration on ideas and suggestions to rebrand the school. Here are some suggestions that the school will be working to do this school year:
  - Designing a new webpage- currently the school’s webpage is not very user friendly or mobile friendly. We will work with a local company to design a more suitable and mobile friendly webpage for the school. The school is currently waiting on a price quote for this project.
  - Based on a recent poll, 82% of people use the internet to search. Therefore, a “Google My Business” account will be created. This will boost our website and put it at or near the top of the list for schools in Dover. Currently, AOD is 13<sup>th</sup> on the list.
  - Radio ads are the second largest way to increase advertisement. The first is social media. The school will work with iHeart Radio to produce a short commercial on the radio.
- AOD will hold an Open House in November and again in January. During this time, interested families can get a tour of the school, meet with the administration about different events that occur throughout the year, go over curriculum, and discuss what a day at AOD will look like for their child.
- AOD is having discussions regarding an ECAP 4 year old program at AOD. The program would be funded by ECAP and would be housed at AOD. This program would have two sessions, morning and afternoon, throughout the regular school day. The plan would be to retain the 4 year olds that participate in the program since they would be familiar with the school and staff in the building. ECAP would be considered part of AOD and students would be included in AOD nights, etc. The school is currently in the planning stage with this program. Discussions with the ECAP facilitator will be forthcoming.
- Administration will continue to have regular weekly school tours. Interested families can sign up by calling the school. All tours are Tuesday at 1:30 or by special appointments based on parents’ availability.

**2. Provide a list of activities AOD has historically used for staff recruitment and retention. Provide a list of new activities and a calendar/timeline.**

Historically, AOD has recruited staff by posting job opportunities on [www.joindelawareschools.org](http://www.joindelawareschools.org). This has been successful in getting a pool of applicants to choose from. Until recently, AOD has only had about 2 to 3 teachers relocate to other schools each year. This number has increased recently as there has been a trend with all schools having to hire new staff. In talking to local districts, many teachers are leaving schools in search of higher salaries. Since there is not a statewide uniform salary scale, teachers are leaving schools where they have been teaching for several years to find a new higher paying district. Since AOD is not financially able to compete with large districts, this has had a negative impact on teacher retention. AOD is working on a remedy based on the financial restraints.

One thing that AOD has incorporated over the last three years is a Performance Bonus Pay Initiative for highly qualified teachers who have stellar performance during the school year. Specific criteria is set and must be met in order to qualify for this incentive.

Criteria 1: Teachers must receive an overall rating of “Effective” or “Highly Effective” on the DPAS II Summative Evaluation with a “Satisfactory” or “Exceeds” rating in all 5 Summative categories in order to qualify. Overall Effective rating = \$500.00, Highly Effective rating = \$1,000.00

Criteria 2: Teachers get additional bonus based on their years of service at AOD.

- 1-2 years full time = \$100.00
- 3 years full time = \$150.00
- 4 or more years = \$1,000.00

Teachers could earn up to \$2,000.00 based on their performance during the school year. This incentive is part of Title 2 for Teacher Retention and Recruitment and has been approved under the Title 2 Grant. Incentives will be given in June after the Summative Evaluations are completed. In the past, this has been well received by teachers. The plan is to continue to initiative in future years.

AOD looks to hire highly qualified teachers. In 2016, AOD had 100% of HQ teachers. This year, there are several new teachers in the profession. Many of them are HQT, however, there are two who do not hold that status currently. The plan is to have those teachers take the HQT survey when it becomes available.

AOD will look into local job fairs as a way to recruit new teachers. One that we are aware of is the UD job fair. This usually takes place in the spring. The school will also look into DSU and WILMU to see when their job fairs take place.

**3. Provide an explanation of how the school is communicating the Smarter Balanced Boot Camp to the Board, parents, students and the community.**

In 2015-16, AOD started an afterschool program to help students in preparing for the upcoming spring assessment. The idea strung from when AOD had a DCAS Boot Camp in which students stayed after school and worked on skills needed for the DCAS. Administration thought it would be a good idea to develop an after school program for the new Smarter Balanced Assessment. In addition to their regular instruction during the day, students would have the opportunity to work on performance tasks and other activities that mirror the assessment. In December, all students in grades 3-5 were provided with a letter explaining

the program and gave parents the opportunity to allow their child to participate. The school was hopeful that enough students would participate to be able to actually do the program. Last year we got a surprising response of 60 students. This program was open to anyone who wanted to participate and stay after school twice a week for 1 hour. The program ran for 11 weeks. As part of the parent letter, the program was explained to parents as follows;

*“Students in the program will receive additional help in the areas of ELA, Math, and test taking strategies for the upcoming state assessment in March. Students will also be provided with weekly fluency practice in the areas of Oral Reading Fluency as well as practice for basic math facts in the areas of multiplication, division, and fractions”.*

We had two 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers, a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, a 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, a board member, and a paraprofessional all volunteer to stay after school to help make this program successful for the students. Teachers brainstormed ideas in order to make this program successful. Together, they came up with priority focus areas, which included:

- Math- story problems, fluency (multiplication, division, fractions)
- ELA- Main idea, summarizing, context clues, Oral Reading Fluency

Each week teachers would alternate ELA and Math. Teachers started with a whole group fluency drill, followed by three 15 minute rotations. Since each room had 2 teachers, it was easier to do small groups. The activities looked like this:

- Math:
  - 10 minute fluency (whole group)- students track data in folders
  - 15 minute groups: Teacher 1- AVA or Digital Library task, Teacher 2- Story Problems, Independent- IXL
- ELA:
  - 10 minute ORF (whole group)
  - 15 minutes groups: Teacher 1- AVA or Digital Library task, Teacher 2- Focus skill (above), Independent- Paired ORF and tracking WPM in folders

Since last year was the first year of implementation, AOD administration and teachers are currently having discussions on how this program can be assessed to ensure that it is effective in the future. Many parents and several staff have already inquired about the program, and wanted to know if we would be doing it again.

***4. Revise ELA and Math curricular units based on deficiencies identified within the rubrics and describe interim assessments used to monitor student growth and make adjustments to curricula throughout the year.***

AOD has had discussions with DOE regarding the ELA unit and revisions have been made. The revised units and summative assessments for ELA and Math are attached.

*Attachment 4.1 Math unit with revisions*

*Attachment 4.2 ELA unit with revisions*



**5. Describe any changes to the educational program to ensure that student gains are sustained based on the proposed shorter school year. Explain how professional learning schedule will be sustained based on proposed shorter school year.**

Since the spring of 2016, AOD has been moving forward in the development and formation of a collaborative process that would promote an opportunity for staff members to look at student performance in a more concise manner through the use student data in order to have better conversations relating to instructional issues and concerns as they relate to student performance.

This year, AOD has worked extremely hard in establishing a PLC format designed to help staff members develop the necessary instructional tools to better identify student needs by using their instructional data for the core content areas to help make better quality instructional decisions relating to the needs of their students. During these meetings, staff members share information pertaining to ideas and any adjustment they may made in their instructional delivery in order to establish a monitoring cycle (both formal and informal) to monitor and assess student performance. As part of this final process, teachers collect and review assessment data in order to identify students who continue to struggle and who may need a more customized approach to their instruction.

Based on the present model that is being used at AOD, other components will be discussed among staff on how this process can be more beneficial in helping teachers meet the needs of their students during the course of the year (Ex. Staff Resources and providing PD training). It should also be pointed out that the current time frame for PLC meetings here at AOD are approximately 45 minutes long, every other week and run from early September to the first week in June. Efforts are being made for next year to look at ways to expand on providing staff with more time to participate in this process. One adjustment that has been added this year is to provide additional time using half day sessions two times this year (In January and early June) in order for the staff to come together and review all school data and have conversations related to what areas of need they want to address moving forward. There will be three ½ day meetings scheduled for the 2017-18 school year.

AOD does not feel that the PLC process will be impacted due to the reduction of instructional days. The plan for next year is to increase the amount of time that is spent in PLC and the school is working on ways to do so. AOD has a more formal process in place for identifying, analyzing, interpreting, monitoring, and assessing student performance as well as providing additional time in the school calendar for staff members to have collaborative discussions pertaining to the academic needs of the students. The reduction of instructional days will not impact the PLC process for both staff and students.

**6. Provide 2017-18 school calendar and attendance survey based on 180 days to include weather contingencies/unforeseen closures.**

The 2017-18 calendar and hourly attendance survey are attached (*attachment 6.1*). With AOD reducing the school year from 200 to 180, the 1,154 instructional hours is still above the required hours set by state law.

**7. Describe a plan for evaluating new reading curriculum with a timeline.**

The Reading Wonders program is brand new to our school this year. All staff were trained in the new reading series prior to school starting by a trained representative from McGraw Hill. One way staff plan

to evaluate the curriculum is by using diagnostic and benchmark assessments throughout the school year to track student growth. The reading series consists of the following assessments:

- The benchmark assessment is given three times during the year; beginning, middle, and end. This assessment gives teachers information they need in order to place students in differentiated small groups.
- Formal weekly assessments are used to monitor progress, and to inform instruction.
- Unit assessments tests students on various skills they learned and practiced during the entire unit.

Since the Benchmark assessments are given three times per year, teachers felt that this assessment would better showcase the results of student growth. The timeline for these assessments are:

- Beginning of year- August
- Middle of year- January
- End of year- May/June

Teachers have administered the beginning of year benchmark and are keeping track of their data. This information will be shared and discussed in PLC's throughout the school year.

Teachers in grades 3-5 will also be able to determine if the program was effective based on the State Assessment in the spring.

AOD has reached out to the McGraw Hill representative for feedback on ways to evaluate the curriculum that they may share other schools. We are still waiting for a reply back from them. The school will continue to follow up with them.

**8. *Provide updated RTI information to include fall screening results that show how students are distributed by tiers. Describe tier II and tier III interventions.***

At AOD, we use research-based, individually administered, standardized assessments in a formative manner, to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulties, to help teachers identify areas to target instructional support, and to monitor at-risk students while they receive additional, targeted instruction through RTI. Data, such as DIBELS scores, is analyzed and utilized to help us make academic decisions that will have the most beneficial impact on our students to help them achieve their personal best. At the completion of each of the three Benchmark assessments, each grade level's sub-skill scores are used to calculate the composite score using the given formula. Once the composite scores are calculated, the DIBELS cut scores are used to determine which students performed at benchmark level, below benchmark level, and way below benchmark level on that particular Benchmark assessment.

As indicated in the chart below, 69% of AOD's current overall population is at tier I, 25% is at tier II, and 6% is at tier III. There are multiple factors contributing to some probable causes for our percentage of students at tier 1 being below the "ideal" of 80%. We have 73 students who are new to us this year. Many of our incoming kindergarten students did not have the benefit of attending a preschool where they would have been exposed to critical foundational skills, nor were many of these students exposed to these skills at home. We have found that since RTI is preventative, and provides immediate support to students who are at risk, a large percentage of our tier II and tier III kindergarten students will quickly advance to tier I, as shown in prior years' data. Not all of our new students are in kindergarten, so other factors must be considered as well. Some of our new students were previously homeschooled and others are new to the State and even

to this country. These students may have been taught with a less rigorous curriculum and may not have been expected to meet standards equivalent to that of Common Core. In addition, we have 11 ESL students this year; a few of these students spoke very little English when they started with us at AOD. Our ESL students receive ESL services, but that does not preclude them from receiving additional service through RTI when the data indicates a need for this. In addition, being identified as a special education student does not preclude our students from receiving RTI services. If the data indicates the need, our special education students receive RTI services above and beyond their special education services. Additionally, our school population has a number of at risk students, who are being closely monitored through RTI.

### Numbers and Percentages of Students in Each RTI Tier Grade Level and School-Wide

	October 2016		
	Tier I	Tier II	Tier III
K	24 / 62%	15 / 38%	0 / 0%
1	37 / 77%	10 / 21%	1 / 2%
2	37 / 77%	7 / 15%	4 / 8%
3	27 / 69%	10 / 26%	2 / 5%
4	26 / 59%	14 / 32%	4 / 9%
5	21 / 64%	8 / 24%	4 / 12%
% of students at each tier School-wide	69%	25%	6%

Every student who performs “below benchmark” or “way below benchmark” on a Benchmark assessment, is placed in an RTI group where he/she will receive services designed by the educator to meet the student's needs identified through the data. Students who are way below benchmark receive interventions a minimum of 30 minutes a day 5X a week. Those who are below benchmark receive interventions a minimum of 30 minutes a day 3X a week. Students with the lowest scores are placed in groups with the Reading Specialist. In order to keep group sizes appropriate to the needs of the students, if there are over five or six students who are way below benchmark, the remaining students with the higher scores in that level are placed in groups with the classroom teachers. Students who are below benchmark are placed in groups with the classroom teachers as well, but no group ever exceeds 6 students. If there are more students still at this level once the teacher groups are full, then the remaining students with the highest scores at this level would be placed in groups with paras under the direction of teachers.

DIBELS data is also utilized by teachers and intervention providers to help them create each intervention. The results of each assessment are visible by all teachers and the reading specialist through Voyager Sopris V-Port. Teachers can click on students' scores on each subskill and the actual assessment is displayed.



Teachers can then do a miscue analysis for each student to help them create targeted interventions that best meet each student's needs. At tier I, teachers dig deep into the data to identify student weaknesses and provide differentiated instruction to meet the specific needs of all students, to help them increase their performance on those weaker skills. Differentiation is done by the teacher in the classroom, but paras may be utilized to assist in providing the differentiated support as well. In addition, students who perform above benchmark are identified through the analysis of the DIBELS Benchmark data. Teachers give those students accelerated work at least during RTI time to help them further increase their skills in these areas.

Voyager Sopris V-Port creates charts and reports showing Benchmark scores as well as progress monitoring throughout the year. These are shared with parents, Special Education teachers, etc. to show student growth and to guide decisions regarding the RTI tiers. When the data shows that tier I differentiated instruction is not sufficient to meeting a student's needs, the student is then moved to tier II, where the teacher or team utilizes strategic strategies and materials aimed at developing each student's skills in a small group and/or additional coaching, as warranted. When tier I and tier II interventions have failed to produce enough results, students are moved to tier III, where the teacher provides an even higher level of instruction and evaluation. If a student continues in this manner, our IST will meet to determine the next step. Data is used to support and drive each decision to help our students grow academically.

Throughout all three RTI tiers, the teachers and paras utilize a wide variety of research-based intervention strategies within the tiers such as, but not limited to: teacher modeling, echo reading, guided reading, shared reading, choral reading, partner reading, multiple modalities of instruction, lines of text, chunking, use of a scaffolded progression of text level, rereading, assisted reading, explicit instruction, graphic and semantic organizers, guided discussion, prompting and cuing, look backs, highlighters, think alouds, varied questioning techniques, manipulatives, visuals, Beck's Vocabulary Strategies, Words Their Way, phrasing, visualizing, guided and independent text analysis and coding, word sorts, word building, scaffolded instruction, shared/guided/and independent text-dependent writing, Say-it-and-Move-it, Elkonin Boxes, flash cards, making and breaking words, shared/guided/ and independent cloze readings.

Teachers also utilize DIBELS Benchmark data to determine the frequency of progress monitoring needed for each skill that was assessed for each student. When a student's performance on a given skill is below or way below benchmark level for that skill, that student is progress monitored on that specific skill weekly. If the student's performance on a given skill is barely at benchmark level, the student is progress monitored every other week to ensure the child's continued progression toward a more solid benchmark level and that the child doesn't slip below benchmark. Once a student is solidly at the benchmark level on a given skill, the frequency of progress monitoring on that skill decreases to once a month. The data continues to be looked at even once a student has reached benchmark level, and if warranted, the frequency of progress monitored will be increased again. Some of the skills have multiple scores to consider when making these decisions, such as oral reading fluency, and teachers look at all of them in order to make the decision as to the frequency of progress monitoring required to meet each student's needs.

#### ***9. Provide PLC framework and plan.***

The purpose of the Professional Learning Community (PLC's) is to provide staff members with the opportunity to work on instructional areas of improvement by reviewing, interpreting, analyzing both school wide and state data for the purpose of developing plans of interventions in order to impact as well

as sustain student performance through the school year. Staff members will also be provided with the opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers to problem solve different instructional challenges that are pertinent to their particular grade level. Finally, the PLC will offer professional development support, as well as resources to staff members, in order to provide them with the best instructional practices that can be used to support student success and achievement within the classroom. Currently, teachers meet on a bi-weekly basis for 45 minutes each time. The schedule looks like this:

Gr. 3 Tues. 10:00-10:45  
 Gr. 5 Tues. 10:45-11:30  
 Gr. 2 Wed. 8:30- 9:15  
 Gr. 4 Wed. 9:15- 10:00  
 Gr. 1 Thurs. 1:30-2:10  
 K. Thurs. 2:20- 2:55

The information below outlines dates and topics for each meeting for the first half of the school year.

09/12/16	Discussion of Data Analysis Procedures for using Classroom Data
09/26/16	Data Analysis of ELA Results/ Discussion on Areas of Focus for the 90 Minute ELA Block
10/10/16	Data Analysis of SMI Math Results/ Walkthrough Guidelines for ELA/Math
10/24/16	Wonders update/suggested strategies for enhancing Student Engagement during instruction/Use of online Assessments for ELA
11/14/16	Progress Monitoring Update for SMI/Math Data /Restructuring of Groups
11/21/16	Progress Monitoring Update for SMI/ Math Data/ Customizing Assess. /Interventions
12/05/16	Review on critiquing/Grading Student's Written Work (Short Responses)
12/12/17	Progress Monitoring Update for ELA/ Customizing Assess. /Support <i>In order to provide ample time to review student progress for ELA and Math as well as provide the opportunity for staff members to work collaboratively with the reading and math support personnel, two meetings will be scheduled in order to provide enough time to complete this task.</i>
01/09/17	Progress Monitoring Update for ELA/ Restructuring of Groups/ Support
01/23/17	Discussion and Selection of Students for SBAC "Boot Camp"/ Small Group Instructional Focus Areas for ELA/Math

The information below outlines dates and topics for each meeting for the second half of the school year. This information may change slightly based on progression and needs of staff.

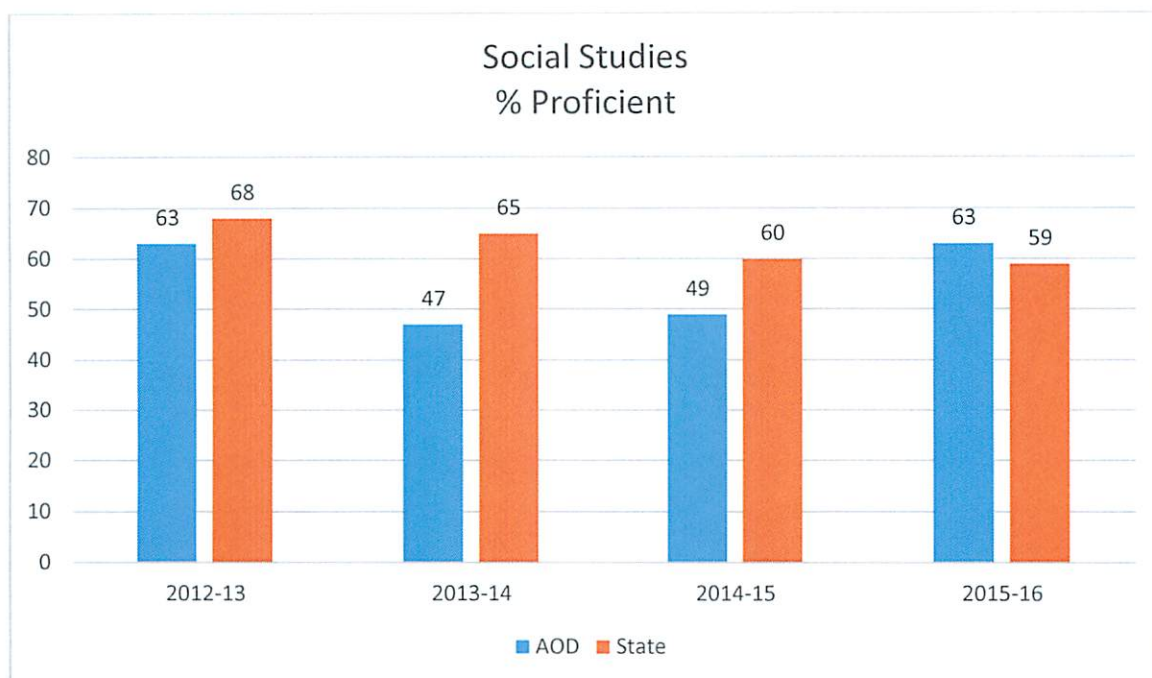
01/30/17	Review on Critiquing/Grading Student's Written Responses (Writing Prompts)
02/14/17	½ Day In-Service- "State of the School" Review of School wide data for ELA/Math
02/27/17	Follow up on the implementation of Small Group Action Plans for ELA/Math/SBAC
03/13/17	School wide Feedback to staff on Building Walkthrough
03/27/17	Discussion on Developing Student's Written Responses (Short Responses)
04/10/17	Progress Monitoring Update for SMI/Math Data /Restructuring of Groups/Support
04/24/17	Progress Monitoring Update for ELA/ Restructuring of Groups/ Support
05/22/17	School Walkthrough Update/Discussion on PD Needs Assessments for Staff for the 2017-18 school year.
06/05/17	½ Day In-Service- "State of the School" Review of School wide data for ELA/Math/ Setting of Student Performance Goals for 2016-17.

Attachment 9.1 shows PLC minutes from the beginning of the 2016-17 school year.

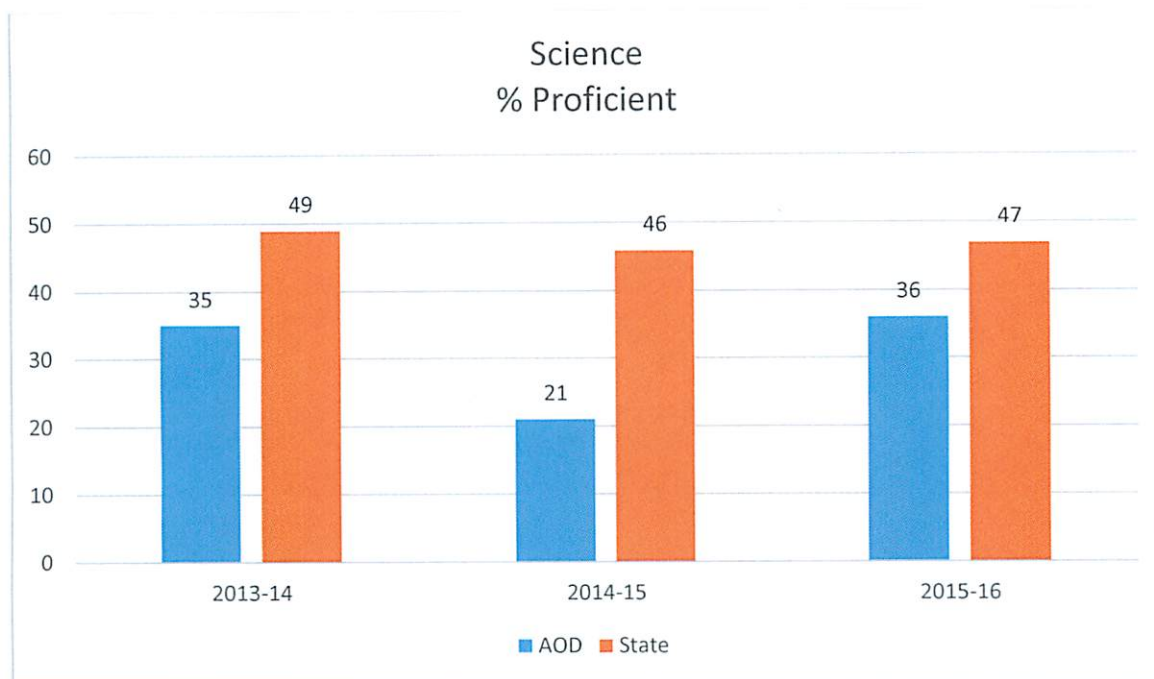
Attachment 9.2 shows a data report from a third grade teacher that was used in PLC.

**10. Describe the process of analysis of and conclusions drawn from science and social studies data.  
List identified areas of weakness and what is being done this school year to address these areas.**

The following chart shows Social Studies proficiency scores over the last four years compared to the states proficiency scores. During the 2012-2014 school years, the state continuously outperformed AOD. In reviewing student scores and having conversations with teachers regarding the social studies curriculum, a plan was put in place to provide professional development to staff in this area. Many teachers felt uncomfortable using the Delaware Recommended Curriculum provided by the Department of Education. The teachers felt that it was not written to target their grades and expressed concerns with their students not understanding what was being taught. Teachers began supplementing a lot of material to help make the DRC more student friendly and easier for students to understand. Administration contacted Fran O'Malley for assistance. During the fall of 2015, Fran provided a half day training to AOD staff on using the DRC and provided additional resources to enhance the lessons. We believe that in helping the teachers to better understand what they were teaching, they in turn were able to better help their students to be successful. During the 2015-16 school year, AOD outperformed the state in the Social Studies assessment.



AOD added fifth grade in 2013 making the school a K-5 charter. During those three years, AOD has identified science as an area of weakness. The following chart shows the data from 2013-2015. The state continues to outperform AOD in this area.



By digging deeper into the science data, AOD discovered that students were weaker in the area of Life Science. Currently teachers are trained in the science kits through the Science Coalition. We understand that DOE is working on the science kits to ensure they are better aligned to the NGSS. Until this is done, our teachers will continue to use the current science kits in their classrooms and provide additional supports to cover the standards not currently addressed. Administration and teachers realized that changes needed to be made in our science instruction. Therefore, during the 2015-16 school year, AOD contracted with the Southern DE Professional Development Center to provide training to staff in the area of Science. Rhonda Banks facilitated professional development several times throughout the school year. Teachers were provided with training on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and worked to determine what standards were covered with the science kits and to identify gaps within those kits. She also conducted walkthroughs during science time and did a follow up with teachers on idea and suggestions to enhance their science instruction. Rhonda Banks has been contracted again for the 2016-17 school year to provide this NGSS training to new teachers and to conduct walk-throughs during science time. She will meet with teachers to provide support where necessary. She will also be working closely with the fifth grade teacher to provide support and guidance so that the class will be successful on the Science assessment in the spring. The timeline for this professional development is as follows:

- December 16<sup>th</sup>- Science training on NGSS with Rhonda Banks
- January 24<sup>th</sup>- 25<sup>th</sup> Science walkthroughs and meetings

**11. Describe the process of analysis of and conclusions drawn from growth and growth to proficiency data. List identified areas of weakness and what is being done this school year to address these areas.**

At the time of this response, AOD had not received the DSSF report from the 2015-16 school year.

AOD showed a 13% growth overall in ELA and a 28% growth overall in Math from spring 2015 to spring 2016. Last year 36% of students were proficient in ELA and 26% proficient in Math. Staff looked at the



data to determine what area the students were weaker in. The data from 2015 and 2016 showed that math problem solving and reading were the weaker areas. Since 2015 was the first year of the SBAC, teachers knew the scores would be lower. Therefore, the conversations began on how to address these areas of weakness within the classroom instruction and make changes in order to show growth in test scores for years ahead. AOD implemented the following changes:

- A Smarter Balanced Boot Camp for 11 weeks to provide extra support for students in grades 3-5. 2015
- Teachers were trained on the usage of the Smarter Digital library and the Assessment Viewing Application (AVA) and began tying these into the daily instruction. 2015
- Adopted a new math RTI program (SMI) 2016
- Began bi-weekly grade level collaboration meetings to look at data, etc. 2015
- Created yearlong curriculum maps, found gaps within curriculum and identified ways to close the gaps. 2015
- Adoption of a new Reading curriculum 2016
- Teachers began doing more problem solving and word problems within the classroom. 2015

These changes helped to structure the academic program at AOD to meet the needs of our students. With the implemented changes, AOD showed a growth in state testing during the 2015-16 school year, with 49% of students' proficient in ELA and 54% proficient in Math. Teachers were committed to helping their students excel in all academic areas. While the data shows growth, AOD is not satisfied yet. Teachers and students will work diligently to ensure success in both their daily academic instruction as well as on the state assessments each and every year moving forward.

The attached data chart (*attachment 11.1*) outlines SBAC results from 2014-15 in comparison to 2015-16 school years. The bolded percentages show where AOD performed better than the state overall, as well as in African American and special education subgroups.

## ***12. Explain how Smarter Balanced Boot Camp enhances the general curriculum and supports the RTI program.***

The Boot Camp program enhances the general curriculum. The planning, daily communication, focused execution and engaging challenge bonded the administration, staff, parents and students. Four weeks of planning, 11 weeks of action and 1 day of celebrating impacted 52 students, their families and peers in a positive way. Parents and students in grades 3 through 5 were invited to go on this Boot Camp journey. The teachers and administrators were in communication with parents. They canvassed each family, making sure all who wanted to attend would not be denied an opportunity to participate.

Instruction and small group selection were carefully planned. Teacher instruction was explicit and systematic. Models of proficient problem solving were provided as was verbalization of thought processes, guided practice, corrective feedback and frequent cumulative review. Teachers were proficient in the use of visual representations of mathematical ideas. Students were challenged to "practice, dig and master" the math. Students worked and rotated in small groups every fifteen minutes. One small group had students review math strategies where ideas were reinforced. In another small group the teacher used a white board to model the process of solving Smarter Balance questions. The teacher highlighted

the structure of various problem types and common underlying structures between familiar and unfamiliar problems. Students discussed challenging problems in depth, and then solved them. Another small group was devoted to students practicing specific skills using technology, they worked hundreds of additional problems on IXL. The final small group was devoted to students building fluent retrieval of basic arithmetic facts through games and sprints. This group charted their own progress.

As students mastered skills, they were able to transfer their knowledge to solve more rigorous problems. Teachers praised students for their effort. The students dug deep and challenged one another. They experienced a productive struggle as they shared thoughtful and clear explanations when solving problems. Student grit was building and there was an increase in student self-confidence. A more positive attitude toward solving problems began to emerge. This attitude spilled over to peers not attending Boot Camp. Small group rotations became more productive in the regular classroom. The extra practice and the extra reinforcement were working; students, teachers, parents and administrators were seeing mastery in the making.

An unintended consequence of Boot Camp involved establishing, and in some cases, reestablishing a positive relationship with parents not normally visiting the school due to a conflicting work schedule. Parents picking up their children from school after each Boot Camp found themselves not only fondly interacting with an administrator or teacher, but also asking how they as a parent could further help their child be successful in school.

***13. Describe the process of analysis of and conclusions drawn from identified curricular gaps. List identified areas of weakness and what is being done this school year to address these areas.***

During the 2014-15 school year, teachers began pacing out their curriculum for the entire year in hopes to get a better understanding of where gaps may lie within the curriculum. Teachers began having conversations in regards to what they felt their students lacked coming into their grade. For example, third grade teachers expressed concerns with place value. When looking at the curriculum, and talking to teachers in kindergarten through second grade, it was discovered that students were introduced to place value in kindergarten and taught the same concept in more detail in first and second grades. This was concerning since the third grade teachers did not feel that the students really grasped the concept of place value. Conversations like those continued throughout the year. In the fall of 2015, Esther Jackson, a retired curriculum director from another charter school was contracted to help staff with creating curriculum maps. Mrs. Jackson worked with staff several times and guided them on how to create curriculum maps and to identify gaps in the curriculum. After months of working, teachers created yearlong maps in all grades K-5 as well as related arts (Music, Art, Physical Ed.). While collaborative discussions were taking place during these meetings, teachers found that the ELA curriculum did not cover all the standards and certain skills were not scaffolded throughout the grades. During the spring of 2016, administration along with all classroom teachers began researching new ELA curriculum. After reviewing and critiquing samples from Wonders and Journeys programs, AOD decided to move forward with a strong literacy based reading curriculum, Reading Wonders. Plans were put in place for budgeting the cost and determining how staff would be trained in the curriculum. AOD is currently in full implementation with the new reading program for the 16-17 school year.

Earlier this year, teachers worked to revise the curriculum maps created last school year and worked to create a new map for ELA. In doing so, teachers identified very few standards that are not being addressed. Currently, teachers are using [www.betterlesson.com](http://www.betterlesson.com) to supplement activities that address those missing

standards. The plan moving forward is for teachers to continue having discussions and identifying any gaps and determine ways to address them.

*Attachment 13.1 Yearlong Curriculum Map for first grade.*

***14. Provide Board Oversight Committee Minutes.***

Minutes were submitted to Mr. Taylor and the Charter School Office.

***15. Identify areas of strength and needs based on the Board's self-evaluation and outline the vision, strategic plan, and goals the Board developed based on the DANA training. The response should reflect how the Board's governance perspective relates to the instructional leadership's perspective.***

*Attachment 15.1 DANA survey results*

*Attachment 15.2 Strategic Plan which includes Fund Development Plan*

***16. Provide a calendar and describe the activities the Board plans to accomplish as part of its fund development plan.***

This section is included in the Strategic Plan from # 11 above and is part of attachment 15.2 (pages 5-6).

***17. Review academic goals on page 16 of the Renewal application and revise as needed.***

Revised Goals:

**Goal #1:** To be at or above the State average for proficiency in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

- Primary assessment tool: Smarter Balanced/DCAS
- Rationale: According to the Performance Framework guidelines, schools receive a "Meets Standard" if their average proficiency rate on state assessments in Reading and Math meets or exceeds the statewide average student performance of schools serving the same grades.

**Goal #2:** Students in grades 4 and 5 will meet or exceed their projected growth scores on the State Assessment for ELA and Math.

- Primary assessment tool: Smarter Balanced
- Rationale: According to the Projected Growth Targets set by the Department of Education, each student will be provided with the instructional support necessary to meet and attain their independent growth goal for the school year.

**Goal #3:** To show growth in the Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) and DIBELS Next from beginning of year to the end of year.

- Primary assessment tool: SMI, DIBELS Next
- Rationale: Not only do we want to show growth on the state assessments, but also with our internal assessments. Students will take the SMI and DIBELS assessments 3 times per year to determine what level of interventions they need. This will allow teachers to focus on

individual student needs and work to address these needs during RTI and small group instruction.

**Goal #4:** To demonstrate growth in Reading and Math among subgroups, such as special education.

- Primary assessment tool: Smarter Balanced/SMI/DIBELS
- Rationale: During 2015-16, AOD's African American students scored higher in Reading and Math than the state average for grades third through fifth. We want this trend to continue among other subgroups. Special education students continues to be lower than the state average with the exception of 2015-16 where special education students scored above the state average in Math.