

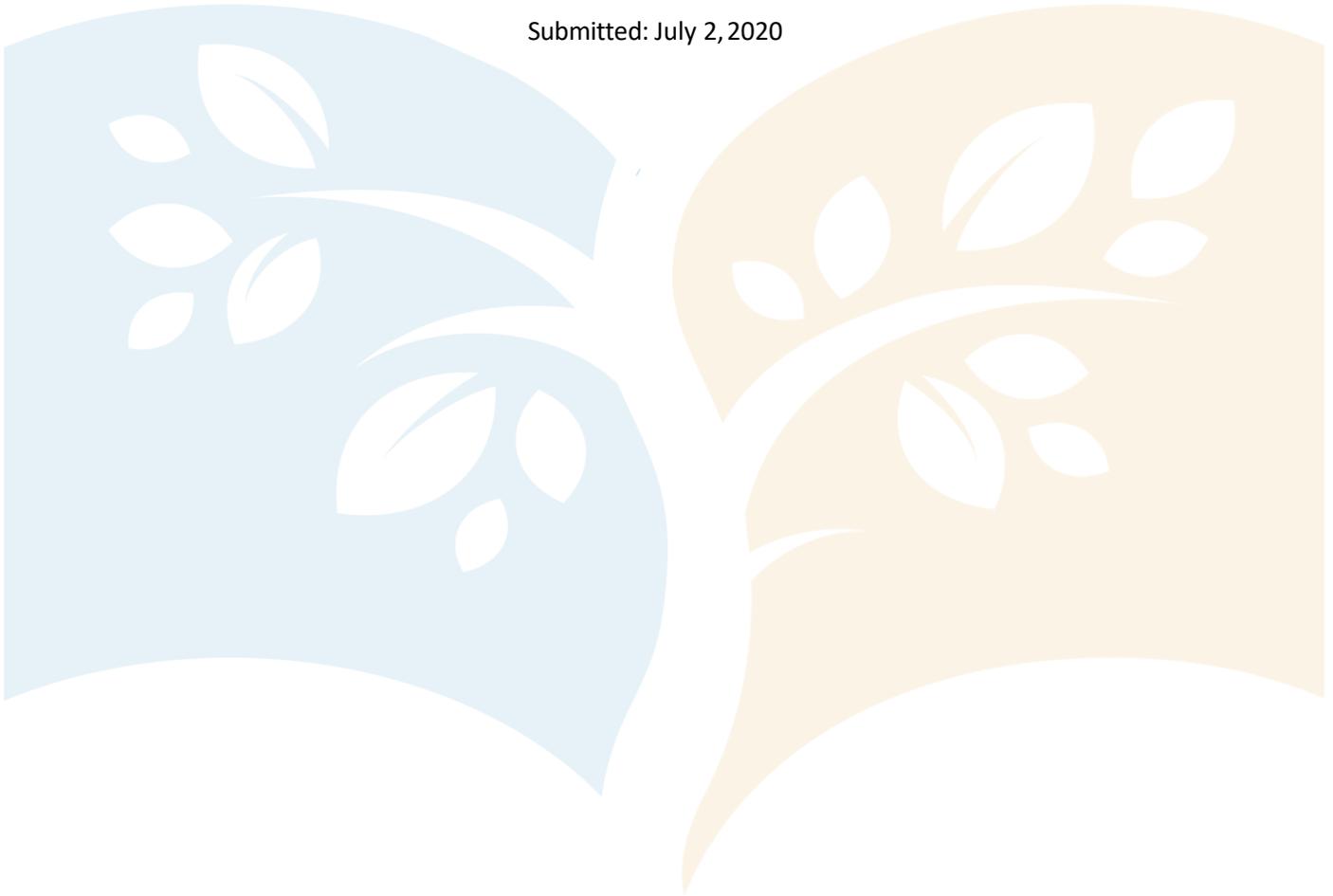
GREAT OAKS



CHARTER SCHOOLS
Great oaks, from little acorns grow

**Response to Request for Additional Information
in Support of Minor Modification**

Submitted: July 2, 2020



I. Opening Narrative¹

This narrative seeks to put in context the two requests for modifications of our charter, trends we have been attempting to address, the events of SY2020, the restructuring of our relationship with the Great Oaks Foundation (GOF) and new organizational structure.

Over the past 18 months Great Oaks has faced some significant internal and external challenges which have forced the Great Oaks Wilmington Governing Board to become increasingly more involved with the day-to-day operations of our school. Last Fall our Executive Director (Head of School) took a leave of absence. The Middle School Principal subsequently also took a leave of absence. Neither leader returned to work at the school. During this time, the Board was supported by the Community Education Building

¹ This narrative serves as a response to the following questions:

FROM THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Question #1: The State Board of Education continues to be concerned about the viability of Great Oaks Charter. Your enrollment appears to be in a decline along with the rates at which you are able to retain students. Yet your future projections seem to ignore both of those trends. Considering the data provided above, how do you reconcile your future enrollment aspirations with your past record of enrolling and retaining students? What do you plan to do differently to meet the goals you propose in your modification?

Question #2: You state on page 6 of your enrollment modification request that you “fully expect to be back in front of the DOE with a major modification next year to present a long-range vision and plan regarding the size of Great Oaks that will allow us to best serve our students and families.” That being the case, what is the need for a minor modification at this point, one year after receiving your charter renewal?

Question #3: Should the Secretary not agree to this modification, what will you do in regards to an agreement you have already initiated?

Question #4: Describe the decision-making process involved regarding the need to restructure the relationship with the Great Oaks Foundation. Who initiated the action?

Question #8: Organizational Framework: Great Oaks Charter has fallen “Far below Standard” for 3 straight years on fulfilling essential governance and public stewardship responsibilities – what is being done to address this?

FROM THE FINANCE OFFICE

Question # 7: The School currently pays 8% of revenue to the Foundation (in addition to the costs of the tutors). (Page 7) On page 8 of the application, Great Oaks states the following: “As we have begun working more closely with the CEB and the DCSN, we are discovering that many of the areas supported by GOF are available through the Department of Education or other supporting state agencies. Further, in many instances, we were duplicating efforts attempting to meet Delaware requirements as well as compliance requirements for GOF.” We request more detail around this. What is being duplicating?

FROM McCRAE

Question 1: I cannot see specifically what positions have been eliminated. Can you please tell us what they are and how the responsibilities previously overseen by those positions will be “absorbed” by the new organizational structure?

FROM GENERAL QUESTIONS

How will the Board provide oversight?

When will the final negotiations be completed?

and the Delaware Charter Schools Network with Linda Jennings volunteering to step in as the Interim Head of School and Geoff Langdon stepping in as Interim CFO.

Through this time, our Board discovered that there was a disconnect between the Great Oaks Foundation and the work happening at our school in Delaware. The work of the CEB and DCSN uncovered that the school team had been duplicating significant efforts in an attempt to satisfy DDOE regulations and GOF procedures. These duplications included using the GOF teacher evaluation tool as well as DPAS; providing both GOF specific professional development as well as statutorily required professional development on top of the professional development required for the academic needs of our Wilmington staff and students; and using GOF financial forms and reports as well as having to produce Delaware specific financial forms and reports.

We determined that our students would be better served if our staff, including our leadership team, lived in and were from our community in Delaware without the need to perform duplicative tasks that take away from meeting the needs of our students. This new team brings more existing knowledge of the Delaware systems making planning for onboarding and transition much more straightforward. This has also been helped by a commitment from those who have stepped in on an interim basis to stay involved in transition throughout the process. We also concluded that to meet the ever changing and increasing needs of our students, we needed to reduce the number of our Tutor Corps while increasing the experience levels of our teachers. By renegotiating new terms to our management contract with GOF, we would be able to keep the number of tutors we know will best be able to assist our students and hire our own leadership team to run all operations of the school. This will also allow us to reduce the number of positions required to manage the Tutor Corps from three to one.

While we very much appreciated and are grateful for the work that the Foundation has done to get us this far, we believe it is in the best interest of our Wilmington students to concentrate solely on our community here in Delaware, with a staff predominantly from our community in Delaware.

In terms of enrollment, the Board has been constantly aware of our trends and fully recognizes that it is unlikely that we will meet the projections from our renewal application. That is why, when given some of the challenges that the school has faced over the last year, we immediately began work on a minor modification to reduce our authorized enrollment and remain in compliance. That minor modification was submitted several months ago. While financial viability is clearly tied to enrollment, it is also clearly tied to the nature of our relationship to the Foundation. The proposed minor modification is driven predominantly to both free up resources by eliminating duplication of efforts and as importantly to meet the specific needs of our student population. Delaying this modification request would mean a continuation of an organizational structure that cannot fully meet the needs of our students.

Finally, I want to stress to the Committee that the Board also takes its Governance responsibilities seriously. The Board will ensure that all new members are fully aware of their commitments to complete all required trainings before they join the Board and a schedule will be created and tracked to ensure full compliance. If a Board member is unable to complete the required trainings, for whatever reason, we will ask them to step off the board.

Financial

From the "Finance Office"

Question 1: Financial Statement Findings/Corrective Action. The FY19 audit findings included a significant deficiency related to the financial reporting close process. Recommendations from the audit are below.

Please indicate whether these recommendations have been implemented and provide documentation of your financial reporting policies and procedures.

The school developed new procedures to ensure that all transactions were timely and accurately made and recorded. The new processes provide for segregation of duties and oversight of all payments made. We now scan every invoice into FSF to ensure that we have access to all needed documentation. Similarly, payroll is entered, reviewed, and approved by three different people to provide for segregation of duties. As of 6/30/2020, accounts payable are current. We implemented an interim budget in February. On a monthly basis, Karen Thorpe produces interim financial statements for the Board's review. We robustly examined financial results monthly comparing budget to actual, which is a primary reason our year end results should be near break-even.

The year-end close is in progress. We have a preliminary balance sheet now. We anticipate much lower accounts payable and a smooth close

The minor modification request indicated that Great Oaks would work with an expert accountant to ensure proper internal controls and financial reporting processes are in place in response to the FY19 audit. Has this occurred? If not, please provide an update on the progress to date.

RESPONSE: Over the past 6 months, we have focused on improving internal control policies and procedures related to payroll, accounts payable and the monthly close, including implementing appropriate segregation of duties. We stopped the practice of using a Foundation credit card and implemented additional procedures to control spending. We also engaged a state-approved office supply vendor.

We are continuing to review all financial processes and procedures relating to accounts payable, accounts receivable, cash management, documentation, payroll, financial reporting, and board review of financial statements. We will document the revised policies and procedures and present them to the Board for approval as they are finalized.

Question #6: You state in section 6, page 8, that the modification will improve Great Oaks' financial position.

- a. Please provide financial specifics regarding the costs created by the acquisition the services of the CTAC and the other individuals and groups you describe in the paragraph headed **Financial Viability** and service outlined in the New Plan table on page 9.*

RESPONSE: The CEB has been a vital resource to Great Oaks at no additional cost beyond normal lease terms which are listed in our projection. Great Oaks has engaged the Delaware Charter School Network on a consulting basis for SY2021 to assist with the completion and monitoring of the consolidated grant, teacher and administrator evaluations, and teacher certification. The cost to Great Oaks will be \$817 a month. The coaching support (identified as CTAC, but which has changed to 4th Dimension) will cost

\$75,000 or less for the year. Both the DCSN and 4th Dimension contracts are onetime expenses supported by a private grant.

In SY2020, Great Oaks spent approximately \$205,000 in salaries for three positions in the finance and operations roles. We will spend approximately \$175,000 with the new structure while substantially increasing the level of experience, which is needed to support the restructuring of our agreement with the GOF. We will continue to subcontract the accounting function until such time the COO is ready to bring that work in-house. The contracted accounting support currently costs \$1,500 a month.

b. Your most recent financial framework analysis indicated that your cash flow is negative. Describe how this will be addressed in your New Plan.

Great Oaks met standard on the 2019 Financial Framework. We expect cash at 6/30/2020 to be approximately \$77,000 less than the balance at 6/30/2019. However, we expect our current ratio to be improved from the prior year, hitting nearly 2; a healthy benchmark for any entity. We have taken many steps to put the school in a better financial position. We have reviewed all of our contracts and have analyzed staffing needs to determine whether it is more effective to hire versus subcontract. We expect to improve our margin by watching days in AP and instituting inventory controls. We have downsized our administrative staff.

Question 4: Appendix 4 – Budget: Please provide additional details regarding the \$1,668,166 amount under “Grants Revenue”. Details should include breakdown by grant.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Opportunity Funding | \$87,232.82 |
| 21st century | \$320,000.00 |
| 21st century supplement | \$134,400.00 |
| Title 1 | \$273,350.00 |
| Title 2 | \$48,356.00 |
| Title 4 | \$30,136.00 |
| Perkins | \$18,343.00 |
| IDEA | \$108,853.00 |
| CTE Innovation | \$19,734.00 |
| Safety Grant | \$14,149.31 |
| CSP | \$250,000.00 |
| Educator Participation | \$85,917.54 |
| Tech Block Grant | \$11,903.00 |
| Math Participation Grant | \$69,786.25 |
| MCI Grant | \$68,817.00 |
| New Sources | \$127,188.23 |
| | <u>\$1,668,166.15</u> |

Question 5: Please provide a budget narrative that clarifies whether funding sources are guaranteed.

RESPONSE: Over 97% of our funding is from the federal, state and local governments so it is as guaranteed from a collection standpoint as it could be. However, the number is variable due to uncertainties about

enrollment and funding levels post pandemic. We used the state's excel template to estimate state and local revenue. We did NOT include an inflation factor. We assumed 415 students a significant reduction from 2019/2020 levels.

The remaining 3% comes from **private sources**. Mr. Kent is known in the community and is excited to raise money and build community support for the school.

Question 8: Great Oaks has had issues meeting deadlines and submitting required reports/information to the central service agencies over the past year (and things have not significantly improved in the last six months). What types of processes/procedures will the school implement to ensure they are meeting compliance deadlines?

RESPONSE: Great Oaks acknowledges the challenges we have faced in timely submitting of required reports and information to DOE and other agencies. This was made even more challenging in SY2020 with the maternity leave of the Director of Operations and the overlapping absences of the school's two founding leaders.

Our responsiveness in many areas has improved in the past 6 months and have initiated the following to ensure we timely comply with all obligations:

1. Developing clarity of roles and responsibilities for every functional task related to academic and non-academic school operations;
2. With the help of the CEB, DCSN, 4th Dimension, and other Business Managers develop a compliance calendar;
3. Identify a lead and a backup for, and remain active in, all DOE affinity groups;
4. Meet with all DOE departments to ensure a full understanding of obligations as well as supports provided.

Question 10:

Can you clarify the amount and timing of any settlement that will be paid to the Great Oaks Foundation during FY21? It's not clear if a settlement has been accounted for in the submitted budget.

RESPONSE: There will be no financial impact to the SY21 budget created by the restructuring of the Great Oaks agreement beyond the elimination of the fee to GOF for ongoing management services.

From "General Questions"

Question 2: Does your proposed enrollment number support the staffing needed to support your plan?

RESPONSE: The proposed enrollment number does support the staffing model. Great Oaks will receive approximately \$225k in CARES Act funds for Students; this will support staffing costs associated with the school's plan.

Question 3: Who will be the expert accountant and please define their role?

RESPONSE: Great Oaks will be supported by two experts: Geoff Langdon and Karen Thorpe. Geoff is an accomplished CPA and the Managing Director at Cover & Rossiter (Wilmington based public accounting firm). Geoff is also a UD professor. Geoff is a founding Great Oaks board member and in January 2020 volunteered to fill the position as Interim CFO to support the school during the leadership transition. Karen Thorpe is a skilled financial consultant with over two decades of relevant experience at Christina and Colonial School Districts. Karen has been providing back office accounting and finance support to Great Oaks from the time that it opened.

Question 4: What internal controls have been Board approved and please provide a copy of them to the Committee?

RESPONSE:

Over the past six months, we have focused on improving internal control policies and procedures related to payroll, accounts payable, and the monthly close; this includes implementing appropriate segregation of duties. We stopped the practice of using a Foundation credit card and implemented additional procedures to control spending. We also engaged a state-approved office supply vendor.

We are continuing to review all financial processes and procedures relating to accounts payable, accounts receivable, cash management, documentation, payroll, financial reporting, and board review of financial statements. We will document the revised policies and procedures and present them to the Board for approval as they are finalized.

II. Enrollment & Recruiting

From "Finance Office"

Question 2: How do you plan to meet the decreased enrollment figures? What is the current status of recruitment efforts?

RESPONSE: As a new school leader of an urban school, Mr. Kent recognizes that he must prioritize family engagement in every aspect of our school's policy and practice beginning with surveys to find out about their current needs and experiences of families and community stakeholders. Covid-19 is still present and its impact is still to be learned. We must be present and engaged moving forward.

We are partnering with two Wilmington-based community stakeholders to enhance Great Oaks Charter School of Wilmington's Plan to be the B.R.I.D.G.E that links school, home, and community by creating quality lasting relationships. The two individuals are:

Community & Schools Development Coordinator (**CaDeidra Jarmon**)
Resource Development Planner (**Dubard McGriff**).

The intent of our collaboration is to address the following objectives:

- To transform and rebrand Great Oaks as a vibrant viable school of choice for children & families.
- To increase the visibility of Great Oaks to the community, new stakeholders, and constituents.

- To implement and coordinate a rotating enrichment schedule introducing new community partnerships, creating opportunities of choice and exposure for all students
- To implement a leadership program and ongoing community & school project initiative
- To support, introduce, and enhance direct services that support the achievement of the students of Great Oaks Charter School.

Spring recruitment phase is over. This phase was difficult (at an unprecedented level) by COVID-19 and the inability to connect face-to-face with parents. Through the spring, Great Oaks successfully contacted two-thirds of our families to discuss school enrollment plans for 2021-22 and beyond.

The Great Oaks team intends to spend more time speaking with our families to better understand and address potential concerns and share exciting information about the 2020-21 academic year.

Our 8th grade cohort will be an ongoing focus area for our re-enrollment team. We know from past experience that many students are interested in switching to a vo-tech high school. We will work to ensure that these students are fully aware of the three new CTE programs of study offered by Great Oaks. We are consistently reaching out to all of our 19/20SY parents and students to confirm future plans. Students transitioning from middle school to high school are very interested in appropriately pursuing all options. Great Oaks staff have noticed that 8th graders often state that they will go elsewhere for high school but stay at Great Oaks.

Question 9: When did the school launch their new “5 Step Recruiting Plan”? On April 1, 2020, the school’s enrollment was 425. On May 1, 2020, the school’s enrollment was 429. As of 6/18/2020, the school’s enrollment was 428. Since April 1, the school has only added three students. Currently, their incoming 6th grade class has eight students. How many students have been recruited since the plan was launched? Does the school feel that any adjustments are needed to meet recruiting goals?

RESPONSE: All Great Oaks families have been called regarding re-enrollment decisions for 2020-21. Recruiting team members will continue to reach out to those parents who we were unable to reach or who have not yet decided. The Executive Director and Deans of Culture will continue to call and will meet with families in the summer through a comprehensive canvassing effort. The recruiting team will actively create tactics to engage parents and students in every way: virtually, at the school, and in satellite locations.

Great Oaks is making adjustments to its recruiting plan to ensure goals are achieved. There is a re-enrollment effort and a recruitment effort. These aligned efforts will be active through the summer phase, until the first day of school. While school reopening plans for the fall are unclear, we must be prepared for both in-person and virtual instruction. Part of our outreach will be surveying parents on their reopening preferences and how we may best serve them. We will also navigate through promising practices associated with attendance/enrollment in our current landscape. Our intention is to build bridges in the downtown Wilmington community and truly connect with families. This will be an ongoing intentional effort, with increased effort over the next four months.

When the 2020-21 school year begins, Great Oaks will quickly reassess and confirm where we stand from an enrollment standpoint in each grade. At that point, the fall phase of recruitment and re-enrollment will begin. There will be a strong effort to increase enrollment in strategically agreed-upon areas until 11/13/20, the formal unit count date.

Ninety-one new applications have been received and thirteen agreements have been signed. This includes eight 6th graders and five seventh graders.

III. Leadership Team

From “State Board”

Question #7: A significant number of leadership/administrative team members have turned over this year. How are you ensuring that team members are successfully on-boarded and introduced to the school community?

RESPONSE: All of our new team members have an existing relationship with Great Oaks and the community of students we serve.

Great Oaks professional development for leaders will begin with strong team building activities, including the establishment of collaborative norms and values. The Executive Director recently completed the Harvard University Data Wise Certification Program and plans to include this as part of on-boarding for all leaders to institute a data-driven approach on all fronts.

The Data Wise Improvement Process will enhance teaching and learning by engaging staff to look at a wide range of data sources, including test scores, student work, and teaching practice with the intentionality of identifying next steps in supporting a culture of collaborative data inquiry in our school community. New leaders will learn about the students and the school through thorough, ongoing analyses of data.

By introducing systems and processes, Great Oaks staff will see that this disciplined way of working with colleagues can lead to a point of transformation- Great Oaks school into a powerhouse of learning.

From “Finance Office

Question 3: Chief Operations Officer. The information provided regarding the background of the new Chief Operations Officer does not include any financial or accounting experience. Please provide additional information regarding the training that has been or will be provided to the COO, including any financial, budgetary and school-based accounting training.

Question 2: Has the Chief Operations Officer been named as yet? (Application states this person will be in place by first week of June).

RESPONSE: Damien Burke joined Great Oaks on June 15. Below are relevant highlights of the experience and education that Damien brings to this role on top of his passion for helping vulnerable youth find successful college and career pathways.

Budgetary and Accounting Experience

- As Executive Director of TeenSHARP, had complete ownership of financials and accounting. Instrumental in obtaining Longwood Foundation Grant: developed comprehensive three-year budget and cash flow projections with scenarios.
 - Redesigned budget to more precisely attribute expenses to departments
 - Successfully applied for Paycheck Protection Program loan
 - Facilitated first formal review of nonprofit’s financials; set stage for future audit

- Successfully applied for several AmeriCorps contracts; handled all fiscal aspects of the partnership (eg, budget, reimbursements, assessments)
- Created and managed \$65MM expense budget and \$3MM capital budget
- Throughout career, recognized for excellent budgetary and deadline management
- Recognized for implementing Balanced Scorecard and aligning strategic priorities with budgetary planning/spending

Urban and High Needs Education Leadership Experience

- At School District of Philadelphia’s Office of the Superintendent, maintained year-round oversight of multiple district-wide strategic projects (including budgetary concerns) at highest-needs schools
 - Led School Opening Process: drive equitable access to resources; achieved 100% readiness through clear expectations, audits, and transparency
- Earned certificate from Broad Residency in Urban Education Fellowship Program, a highly-selective, nationwide, two-year program that prepares existing leaders to become urban education school leaders; program provides robust, ongoing support and professional development opportunities
- Dean of College and Career Readiness at Delaware Design-Lab
- Hired as a College and Career Consultant by several DE school districts
- As a key leader of \$tandByMe’s effort to increase the State’s FAFSA completion rate, Damien has worked in almost every DE high school

Education

- Graduated from the University of Virginia with a B.S. in Chemical Engineering
- Graduated from the University of Delaware with an Executive MBA

Question 4: It appears that in your request to modify your agreement with the Great Oaks Foundation, Great Oaks would be eliminating some positions and creating three new ones, one of which is a COO position. Please provide details on the school's onboarding plan for this crucial new position. How will you ensure a careful transition from the comprehensive services provided from the GOF to the more distributed responsibilities of the newly organized administration?

RESPONSE: Onboarding Plan for Damien Burke

1. Damien will continue working with Geoff Langdon for as long as required to ensure perfect transition and handoff of CFO role responsibilities. Geoff is an accomplished CPA: Managing director, Cover & Rossiter (Wilmington based public accounting firm). Geoff is also a UD professor. Geoff is a founding Great Oaks board member and in January 2020 volunteered to fill the position as Interim CFO to support the school during the leadership transition.
2. Damien will receive training from Karen Thorpe, a skilled financial consultant with over two decades of relevant experience at Christina and Colonial School Districts. Karen has been providing back office accounting and finance support to Great Oaks from the time that it opened.
3. Damien will continue working with Nikki Darden, Director of Operations, through the summer to transfer/document her deep operations knowledge. This is occurring on a daily basis.
4. Damien will complete all required State FSF and PHRST training as soon as feasible.

5. Damien will be an active member of the Charter School Business Managers group and the DEDO HR group. He will contact group members for information, as needed.

Question 5: According to the Organizational Chart provided in Appendix 2, the new COO directly oversees the Operations Manager and Family and Community Engagement. Where does the ongoing work with the GOF to recruit and manage tutors fall?

RESPONSE: The ongoing work with the GOF to recruit and manage tutors will primarily remain with Operations Manager, Kendra Gardiniere. Kendra has held this responsibility for the past five years, since inception.

From “Educator Support”

Question 1 (first bullet): Question 5 in the Application for Minor Modifications addresses staffing. The leadership restructuring is described in this section. When selecting candidates for these leadership positions, what considerations were included in the hiring process? Please speak to previous school leadership experience, urban education experience, administrator certifications in Delaware, experience in high- needs schools, and other criteria used in your selection process.

RESPONSE: Every member of the selected leadership team has significant leadership experience; most have prior school leadership experience. All members of the team have experience working in and with urban education and high needs schools. Samanta Lopez and Leland Kent have both completed the Lead for Delaware program and Amanda Taylor has begun DOE’s administrator induction program.

In addition, each of the selected leaders has experience with, understanding of, and commitment to advancing the success of vulnerable youth and has demonstrated successful entrepreneurial problem solving.

Question 1 (second bullet): With several new administrators, what supports are planned for retaining leaders? Please speak to specific plans related to coaching, participation in the DDOE administrator induction program, professional learning opportunities, feedback through the DDOE administrator evaluation program, and other activities in place for newly placed administrators.

RESPONSE: Leland Kent, Damien Burke, and Samanta Lopez will receive coaching support from 4th Dimension. Amanda Taylor began, and will continue with, the DDOE administrator induction program. We will make this available to the other administrators as well. We will provide Damien with the opportunity to take online human resources training through SHRM. We will work with the DCSN to ensure that all administrators receive feedback through the DDOE administrator evaluation program.

IV. Staffing

From “Curriculum & Instruction”

Question 3: On page 9, where the school states that it is working to take several measures to strengthen the school’s financial health, can you further explain/describe bullet #3 “Redesign master

schedule for more efficient staffing?”

RESPONSE: We are ensuring that class sizes are consistent across the school, that all teachers are carrying a full teaching load, and working with several teachers to become dual certified. Great Oaks Middle School is changing its master schedule from trimester to quarter, to align with the high school. The middle school is also rescheduling the tutor block, which will remove a constraint to increase efficiency. Mathematics and ELA courses in the middle school are growing from fifty minutes to seventy minutes.

a. How might your staffing change and how will this affect support of your student population?

RESPONSE: We have implemented a new organization structure to align with the following outlined goals.

- Integrate and align systems within GOWIL HS & MS
- Narrow departments' focus while keeping cumulative management
- Increase accountability and adaptability to new and evolving approaches to education that include technology and distant learning

We are being proactive in preparing to address our students' needs through restorative practices and a strong partnership with our families and community partners. Future Great Oaks success depends on accelerating the shift to proactive management approach - alleviating the need to spend so much of our time responding to trauma-related incidents and attempting to mitigate negative impacts. We will be looking to find more ways to drive our mission and to improve students' pride, culture, and community perception.

We have realigned our organization to prioritize the needs of our population of students by adding a Reading Specialist and Behavioral Health Counselor.

We have also reduced the number administrators to align with the current needs of the school.

b. Is this redesign reflected in Appendix 4 and only contingent upon differences in student numbers?

RESPONSE: This redesign is reflected in Appendix 4.

From “Educator Support”

Question 2: Under Organizational Performance, the school stated, “Prior to COVID19, we engaged the Delaware Charter Schools Network in creating plans for teachers to complete certification requirements and to support teacher observations.” What is the plan referenced for supporting required teacher evaluations in the upcoming school year?

RESPONSE: This past year, we worked with the Delaware Charter Schools Network to meet our Teacher Evaluation requirements. DCSN has created a plan that they will help our new Leadership Team implement this year with the expectation that our team will be able to take over in the years to come. DCSN with the GO Wilm Leadership Team will create a schedule for all educators to include goal setting, formative and summative observations. DCSN will monitor adherence to the jointly established timeline. DCSN staff will co-observe to support initial formative observations to provide coaching and support for formative feedback to teachers ensuring that evidence aligns to the rubrics.

Question 4: Under Organizational Performance, the school states “we anticipate challenges in hiring qualified math and science teachers in the current environment, we will seek to hire 100% certified teaching staff as we hire teachers for the 2020-21 school year.” What is the current recruitment plan for attracting quality teachers? What is the plan for retaining novice educators? Please speak to the school’s comprehensive induction program. Are there plans to utilize the State’s online hiring system to recruit applicants?

RESPONSE: Yes, we have already begun to utilize the State’s online hiring system to recruit applicants.

We have a teacher residency in partnership with Relay University and Teach For America that is designed to create a pipeline of future educators. The residency will provide onboarding by:

- Establishing and coordinating the relationship with the institutions of higher education for the teacher residency.
- Supporting the school in the identification, interviewing and ongoing support of potential residents.
- Supporting the school in working with the residents to ensure they receive effective support in the classrooms and preparation for licensing.
- Providing support and training for Fellow leadership in evaluating the effectiveness of the Residency Program and design strategic innovation.

Other novice teachers will participate in the state’s comprehensive induction program and utilize state mentoring guidelines. We are also exploring potential partnerships with retired school leaders to provide additional coaching and mentoring to novice teachers.

V. Facilities

From “State Board”

Question 2b: Your current projected enrollment of 427, less than your enrollment of 479 for the 2019-20 academic year should not create a need to expand beyond the two floors that you currently use, thus not requiring the leasing of additional space--an issue you assert is a goal of this modification.

From “General Questions”

Question 5: Is there a guarantee in writing for access to the third floor?

RESPONSE: Clearly, much has happened between the time we submitted the enrollment modification in December 2019, and today. Since January, we have developed a more informed picture of the status of enrollment and the financial health of the school and we more deeply understand the challenges the school faced in the past 18 months.

With the current enrollment projections based on 415 students, we would not expand to a third floor. Expansion to a third floor in whole or part would need to be considered once our enrollment approaches 480-500 students.

While CEB has not guaranteed in writing the availability of the third floor, CEB was expecting Great Oaks to occupy this floor in SY2021 and the floor is presently available. Should CEB identify a potential tenant for that floor, the CEB will provide us an opportunity to place a guarantee on the floor.

VI. Other

Under Question 3, the school stated, “many of our students struggle on the SBAC with computer literacy skills.” What data was used to attribute students’ academic performance to struggling computer literacy?

RESPONSE: Great Oaks noticed during observations of SBAC and NWEA that students struggled with basic keyboarding skills, signing on to different applications and generally maneuvering through applications. This has been communicated to us by teacher responses to surveys regarding schoolwide needs as well. In addition, we know through surveys that a high number of students did not have a computer at home prior to COVID-19 crisis. Many did not have internet access. While we quickly addressed that at the start of the shutdown, it is further evidence of a lack of computer literacy.