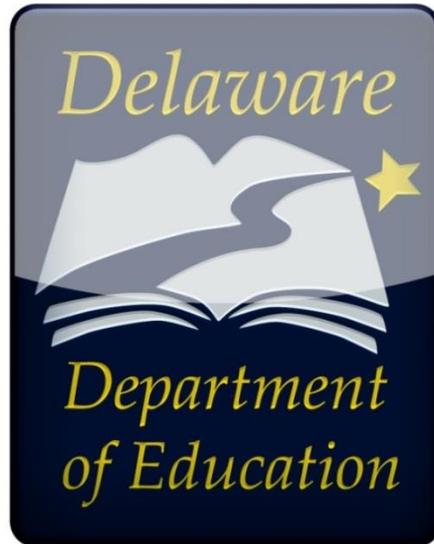


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Delaware Design-Lab High School

**MAJOR MODIFICATION APPLICATION
FINAL REPORT**

CSAC Final Meeting: February 22, 2016
CSAC Final Report Published: February 25, 2016

On December 30, 2015, Delaware Design-Lab High School submitted an application for a major modification of its charter.

The following were in attendance at the Final Meeting of the CSAC on February 22, 2016:

Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- David Blowman, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Associate Secretary, Financial Management and Operations, DDOE
- Karen Field Rogers, Deputy Secretary, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Chuck Taylor, Head of School, Providence Creek Academy
- Deborah Wilson, Community Representative

Non-voting Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- Donna Johnson, Executive Director, Delaware State Board of Education

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee
- Jennifer Nagourney, Executive Director, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Sheila Kay-Lawrence, Executive Assistant, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management
- Chantel Janiszewski, DDOE

Representatives of Delaware Design-Lab High School

- Cristina Alvarez, Ed.D., Chief Executive Officer
- Martin Rayala, Ph.D., Chief Academic Officer
- Joseph Mock, M. Ed., Principal

Additional Attendees

- Casey Guerke, Innovative Schools

Discussion

The following was discussed:

- A summary of the request – Delaware Design-Lab High School (“Design-Lab”) has applied for a modification to decrease the school’s authorized enrolment by more than 15%. In school year 2016-17, the authorized enrollment would decrease from 475 to 350 students (26%). The school explained that the Delaware market presented unique recruitment challenges than other Design-Lab locations. Additionally, the board determined that a lower enrollment would have a significant positive impact on the school’s culture and learning environment.
- The CSAC Initial Report was issued on January 29, 2016 and identified three areas of concern with the application. These areas included:
 - A clearer articulation of the relationship between projected student enrollment that includes new students and the retention of current students
 - Student retention strategy
 - Budget based on 80% projected enrollment.

The applicant submitted a response to the CSAC Initial Report on February 16, 2016.

- A summary of the response to the CSAC Initial Report – The school stated that it had extensive meetings and strategized how to address the three areas of concern. A revised “enrollment waterfall” was developed to address more gradual growth, as well as to minimize any bubbles of enrollment or drop-offs between grades, ultimately minimizing attrition. Basic assumptions included continuous total enrollment and a 90% retention rate from grade to grade with no more than 10% attrition between grades. It is also assumed that open slots would be backfilled with new applications.
- The CSAC cautioned the applicant that in the submitted “enrollment waterfall”, the decreased enrollment in grade 10 from 164 to 150 students over a short amount of time (from 2018-19 to 2020-21) reflects a large amount of attrition not seen in any other grade. In addition, the jump in grade 10 from 137 to 150 students (from 2017-18 to 2018-19) reflects late entries into what is supposed to be a structured, four-year high school program.
- Resolution of parent complaints – The school stated that the dates of the complaints included in the record were from early fall and represented a total of 9 complaints overall. The applicant stated that they have received high approval ratings and numerous positive public comments also included in the record. The applicant indicated that the school took aggressive and proactive tasks to put in place a new school leader and since that time, there have been no fights or further complaints. Since the new school leader took over in the fall, an evidence-based behavior system was implemented and has made a positive difference. The focus has been on building relationships with the students and the parents and to respond to parents as quickly as possible.
- Support for students with disabilities – The school stated that all IEP’s are up to date, and the goal is to implement a co-teaching model in the 2016-2017 school year. Professional development will be provided for staff to implement this model, and the expected

outcome is that all students with disabilities will receive instruction tailored to meet their individual needs. The budget supports this initiative.

- Strategies put in place to retain students – The school stated that the student leadership program in conjunction with the restorative practices model provides students with the skills necessary to relate to others and to handle difficult situations effectively. The goal is to retain all students who enroll through a three-fold process:
 - Provide a rigorous college-prep program
 - Provide a safe, secure school with a positive climate
 - Lead multiple outreach initiatives, which creates an innovative environment that catalyzes different stakeholder groups
- Budget based on 80% enrollment – The school stated that it prioritized academics in its budget, and accounted for the expected decrease in funding from the Christina School District. The school took a conservative stance with the addition of modular classrooms. If there is a need for a contingency plan, the school feels confident that they can meet their funding needs.

Conclusion

Mr. Blowman asked if there were any additional questions about any section of the application. None were noted.

A motion was made and seconded that the Major Modification Application be recommended for approval. All five voting CSAC members voted “yes” in favor of a recommendation for approval.

Next Steps:

- A Final CSAC Report will be issued no later than February 25, 2016.
- A second and final public hearing will take place on March 7, 2016, in the 2nd Floor Auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building, which is located at 820 N. French St., Wilmington, Delaware, beginning at 5:00 p.m.
- The public comment period will close on March 11, 2016.
- The Secretary of Education will announce his decision at the regular meeting of the State Board of Education on March 17, 2016.
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