

Freire Charter School Wilmington

201 West 14th Street
Wilmington, Delaware 19801



Minor Charter Modification Submitted: 10/1/2018

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I. INTRODUCTION

Opportunities for schools to grow and change do not always conveniently occur at the time of a charter school's renewal. As a result, we have developed this Modification Application to allow charter schools an opportunity to propose areas they would like to amend in their approved charters.

Modifications include any change to a school's original charter, such as increasing/decreasing student enrollment capacity, adding/subtracting additional grades, changing the school's mission, and moving to a new facility. Table 1 below outlines the most common types of modification requests and identifies them as either minor or major modifications.

The Delaware Department of Education's Charter School Office has developed specific application questions based on your school's desired change. These questions are designed to provide schools with an opportunity to demonstrate how this proposed modification will enhance their program's success and viability.

As required by law, charter schools shall be modified by the same procedure and based on the same criteria as they are approved. Minor modifications to a charter may be approved by the Secretary of Education with the assent of the State Board of Education. Most major modifications to a charter must be considered through the application process with recommendation for approval or denial made initially by the Charter School Accountability Committee, which is then considered by the Secretary of Education and a final decision is presented to the State Board of Education for assent.

IV. CHARTER SCHOOL MODIFICATION APPLICATION QUESTIONS

There are core questions that must be answered by the applicant, regardless of whether the modification is considered a minor or major modification. Additional questions are determined by the specific nature of the request, for example expansion or reduction by more than 15%, change of name, change of location, etc. Please provide clear, complete, and accurate information in response to each question.

Please indicate the type(s) of modification(s) you are requesting by checking all applicable boxes below:

Table 2

| Minor Modification (Section A Only) | | Major Modification (Section A <u>AND</u> additional questions identified below) | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Enrollment change (increase or decrease) between 5 and 15% | <input type="checkbox"/> | Performance Agreement Section A only |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Change agreement with EMO/CMO | <input type="checkbox"/> | Enrollment change (increase or decrease) of greater than 15% Section B |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Start date (one-time) delay | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grade configuration (adding grade levels or reducing grade levels) Section C |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Name of charter school | <input type="checkbox"/> | Educational Program (i.e. curriculum) Section D |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Existing or planned school facilities or structures (including any plan to use temporary or modular structures) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mission (includes At-Risk designation) Section E |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Change in terms to current site facility arrangement (i.e. lease to purchase) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Replace, remove, or add EMO/CMO, or transfer of authorizer Section F |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Educator Evaluation Process | <input type="checkbox"/> | Enrollment preferences Section G |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A change to the current authorized number of hours, either daily or annually, devoted to actual school sessions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Location change Section H |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | Goals for student performance Section I |

Section A Core Questions:

- 1. What modification does the school's Board of Directors want to make to the term(s) of the charter? Identify the page number(s) on which the term(s) is/are stated in the currently approved charter. If the term(s) of the charter the school wants to modify is/are conditions placed on the charter by the Secretary of Education and members of the State Board of Education, state the condition(s) and the date(s) on which the condition(s) was/were placed on the school's charter.**

We seek to decrease our enrollment for the 2019-20 school year from 560 students to 500 students, a decrease of 10.71%.

- 2. What is the effective date of the proposed modification?**

The proposed effective date is 7/1/2019, for the 2019-20 school year.

- 3. The authorizer will review your most recent Performance Review Reports as part of your application. Discuss the school's academic performance, compliance with the terms of its charter, and financial viability as measured by the Performance Framework.**

Since its opening three years ago, Freire Wilmington has outpaced the state and most area schools in academic growth despite being a young school. Furthermore, during its charter term, Freire has been among the schools with the highest percentages of low income and minority students in the state. On Smarter Balanced tests, Freire has exhibited tremendous growth. In the 2016-17 school year, reading scores represented triple the growth of the state average, with a positive 40-point change in reading scores, compared to the 13-point change statewide for 8th grade. These ELA growth scores placed us 3rd highest statewide for growth. Math scores represented double that of state growth, with a 37-point change in Math scores compared to a 16-point change statewide. These Math scores placed us 14th highest across the state in growth.

In the 2017-18 year, Freire continued to exhibit strong growth in the Smarter Balanced assessment. Freire's reading scores on the Smarter Balanced ELA assessment showed a positive 26-point gain in scores, compared to the 15-point change statewide. This indicates that Freire's average growth was 1.73 times greater the statewide average. On the Marth Smarter Balanced assessment, Freire's scores grew by 7 points compared to the positive 5-point change in Math scores statewide. This indicates that Freire's average growth in Math was 1.4 times greater than the statewide average. Freire has clearly shown the ability to sustain growth in State assessments throughout its charter term, indicating our ability to support incoming 8th graders.

This impressive growth indicates that Freire's academic programming is indeed producing positive results. We attribute these gains to our rigorous curriculum, its alignment to state assessments, as well as the ability of our teachers to engage students in deep critical thinking.

During the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, Freire outperformed many middle schools in the neighboring Brandywine, Christina, Colonial, and Red Clay school districts not only on growth but in proficiency as well. While we have not yet achieved proficiency rates that match the state average, we face challenges in this area. The Smarter Balanced scores of our incoming 8th graders have been significantly behind their peer statewide on their prior year 7th grade tests. As we begin with 8th grade, we also face the issue of having only one year to work with students toward Smarter Balanced proficiency before we move to being measured based on a new cohort the following year.

Our 2017-18 SAT results were promising despite the 2017-18 school year being our first year with 11th graders and thus our first class to take the SAT formally. Very impressively, 52% of Freire 11th graders scored proficient on the ELA section of the SAT, outperforming the state average by two percentage points. In Math, 19% of Freire 11th graders scored proficient, about 10% behind the state, though this gap narrows considerably within the low-income subgroup.

On the whole, Freire’s academic performance has been strong even if we have not yet been able to achieve a “meets standard” rating on the DSSF. We have met standard in organizational performance and financial viability throughout the term of our charter. Freire has fulfilled its mission specific goal and other terms of its charter. The only area of concern within the organizational performance framework relates to students with disabilities, where we have been rating as approaching standard. We have fulfilled and will continue to fulfill corrective action plans in concert with the Exceptional Children Resources workgroup at DOE on this topic. Financially, the school has had clean audits and met financial ratios year after year. Going forward, Freire expects to continually meet the overall standards set forth in the DOE organizational and financial frameworks.

4. Describe the rationale for the request(s). Discuss any relevant research base or evidence that supports this type of request. (Attachments may be provided)

We have determined that a total enrollment of 500 rather than 560 would be more comfortable for our facility in its current form. This decision came out of on the ground operating experience developed over our first three years of operation. Below is a chart comparing our currently approved enrollment, approximate enrollment for 2018-19, and enrollment requested under the modification.

| | Current Approved | 2018-2019 Projection | Requested Modification |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Grade 8 | 112 | 104 | 100 |
| Grade 9 | 112 | 132 | 120 |
| Grade 10 | 112 | 122 | 110 |
| Grade 11 | 112 | 80 | 90 |
| Grade 12 | 112 | 49 | 80 |
| Total | 560 | 487 | 500 |

- 5. Describe how the proposed modification will impact the operation of the school. Include how student achievement, staffing, facilities, and financial viability of the school may be impacted in the current school year and for the remainder of the school's charter term.**

The modification will not impact the operation of the school because it will align the enrollment expectation with the actual number of students we are serving. Freire is just finishing its planned, gradual initial growth phase, so lowering the enrollment target will not require a budget reduction. We have developed experience operating on a budget based on lower enrollment as a built-in part of our intentional initial growth and met all financial ratios with those enrollments.

- 6. Indicate the projected impact, if any, of the proposed modification on the school's present financial position, and its financial position going forward. If the modification promises to create financial challenges, indicate how those will be remedied.**

The proposed modification will have no financial impact on the school for the reasons described above. The five-year budget submitted as part of our charter renewal application is based on the requested enrollment of 500. Freire's future financial plans are based on this enrollment.