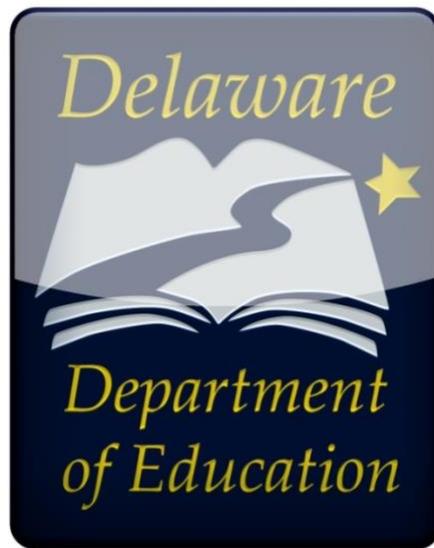


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DDOE)



Great Oaks Charter School MAJOR MODIFICATION APPLICATION FINAL REPORT

Final Meeting: May 27, 2021
Final Report Published: June 3, 2021

On March 18, 2021, Great Oaks Charter School (Great Oaks) submitted an application for a major modification of its charter. The following individuals attended the final meeting of the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) on May 27th:

Voting Members

- Kim Klein, Chairperson of CSAC and Associate Secretary of Operations Support, DDOE
- Gregory Fulkerson, Ph.D., Education Associate, World Languages and International Education, DDOE
- Tiffany Green, Education Associate, Mentoring and Induction, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Finance Office, DDOE
- Joyce Leatherbury, Education Associate, General Supervision IDEA, DDOE
- April McCrae, Ed.D., Education Associate, Science Assessment, DDOE
- Brian Moore, Education Associate, School Climate and Discipline, DDOE
- James Pennewell, Education Associate, Capital Project Management, DDOE
- Michael Saylor, Ed.D., Education Associate, School Leadership, DDOE
- Ted Molin, Community Member
- Charles Taylor, Community Member
- Tierra Fair, Community Member

Ex-Officio Members (non-voting)

- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter Schools Network
- Audrey Noble, Delaware State Board of Education

Staff (non-voting)

- Leroy Travers, Lead Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Alicia Balcerak, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John H. Carwell Jr., Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Darryl Parson, Deputy Attorney General, DDOJ

Representatives of Great Oaks

- Jim Mazarakis, Board of Directors
- Leland Kent, Executive Director
- Damien Burke, Chief Operating Officer
- Samanta Lopez, Head of School
- Kaitleen Gillis, Dean of Student Support Services
- Kendra Giardinieri, Manager of Operations
- Karen Thorpe, Financial Consultant
- Karlin Larkin, Director of Literacy
- Rasheeda Ames- Davis, School Nurse
- Erica Hitchens, Teacher Representative, Board of Directors
- Kirea Broadnax, Board of Directors
- CaDeidra Jarmon, Dean of Student Advocacy and Student Success
- Linda Jennings, Community Education Building
- David Blowman, Community Education Building

On March 12, 2020, Governor Carney issued a declaration of a state of emergency for the State of Delaware due to a public health threat. The state of emergency allows all public meetings of executive branch public bodies, including CSAC, to be conducted electronically, either by means of telephone or video-conference call. This meeting was open to the public electronically only, as was reflected on the State’s Public Meeting Calendar.

Discussion

Ms. Klein shared that this was the final meeting of CSAC relative to the major modification application submitted by Great Oaks Charter School, which included requests to change its grade configuration from grades 6-12 to grades 9-12, to begin with the elimination of grade six in school year 2021-22, grade seven in school year 2022-23, and grade eight in school year 2023-24. The purpose of the meeting was for CSAC to continue its review of the major charter modification application, review any areas of concern with the applicant, and issue its recommendations on the application. Great Oaks was given an opportunity to answer any questions that were asked prior to this meeting and each CSAC member was given the opportunity to share any additional questions or concerns. A summary of those discussions may be found below. A detailed audio account of the CSAC’s final meeting can be found at <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/4361>.

I. Students

- a. Enrollment and Recruitment – As of 4/27/21, Great Oaks has enrolled 318 students (62% of authorized enrolment). The current leadership started in July 2020, replacing a leadership team that left mid-year without systems in place to sustain the success of the school’s first three years. Mr. Kent was promoted to Executive Director after serving as a founding math teacher for five years. School year 2020-21 has been a rebranding year with an emphasis on customer service and professionalism. Recruitment efforts include:

- Citywide canvassing is underway with support from community-based organizations.
- Summer programs available to both Great Oaks and non-Great Oaks students.
- Parent University is available to parents across the city.
- One-to-one technology.
- Google ad campaign

Dr. Noble stated that the school is violation of 14 Del. C. § 506(c)(1) which requires that on or before April 1 of each school year, a charter school shall have enrolled, at a minimum, 80% of its total authorized number of students.

- b. Student Achievement – Dr. McCrae had no further questions or concerns.

II. Education Program

- a. Curriculum & Instruction – Dr. Fulkerson had no further questions or concerns.

- b. School Climate and Discipline – Mr. Moore had no further questions or concerns.
- c. Students with Disabilities – Ms. Leatherbury had no further questions or concerns.

III. Educators

- a. Licensure and Certification – Any uncertified teachers were not offered a position for next year. The open positions will be filled with certified teachers. Great Oaks will continue its partnership with Relay Graduate School of Education to ensure that Great Oaks teachers understand culturally relevant pedagogy and work effectively with the Great Oaks community. Currently, 65 teachers are certified, 34% with standard certification and 31% with emergency certification.
- b. Administrator Certification – Currently, there are no Great Oaks administrators with administrator certification. In accordance with the department’s guidance, the school will make the necessary changes to the administrator titles while the uncertified administrators complete their respective pathways to certification. With Dr. Saylor’s support, Great Oaks has developed a pathway to certification for each administrator. Great Oaks has participated in the new leader induction program and coaching through the Delaware Academy of School Leadership. Four of the current administrators are on-track to complete the induction program this year.

Dr. Saylor asked the school to provide its timeline for developing a comprehensive strategic plan. The Great Oaks Board and leadership team will begin developing its strategic plan on June 14, 2021 and conclude on July 1, 2021.

Dr. Noble stated that the school is in violation of the following State requirements:

- 14 Del. Code § 1401 which requires that all educators must be licensed, certified and evaluated. She also referenced 14 Del. Code § 507 (c) and noted that the word “teachers” was written before 14 Del. Code § 1201 which uses the more inclusive term “educators.”
 - 14 DE Admin. Code 1591 which requires a standard certificate for all Delaware school principals and assistant school principals.
- c. Mentoring – Ms. Green asked the school to confirm that they have a plan to successfully pair all new educators with mentors to guide them through the mentoring program. Mr. Kent noted that next school year, two new educators will receive mentoring. Additionally, although the recommended mentor-to-mentee ratio is 1:3, each Great Oaks mentor will support no more than two mentees.

IV. Financial Viability – Ms. Hughes had no further questions or concerns.

V. Facilities – Mr. Pennewell had no further questions or concerns.

VI. Other

- a. Ms. Fair had no further questions or concerns.

Conclusion:

Prior to voting on a recommendation on the application, Ms. Klein proposed the following conditions for the CSAC's consideration.

1. On or before July 1, 2021 the school submit a plan for at least 65% of Great Oaks teachers to become licensed and certified in their correct content area by September 1, 2021. This will include a plan for each individual unlicensed and/or uncertified teacher currently employed by the school. The certification must be held in the content area in which they are teaching and for the group of students for which they are assigned. Great Oaks is to be reminded that only exception to full licensure and certification is for areas where there is no "qualified alternative certification."
2. On or before July 1, 2021 the school must submit a full recruitment plan for the 2021-2022 school year.
3. On or before the last day of each month the school must submit monthly updates on recruitment and enrollment through September 30, 2021.
4. On or before October 31, 2021 the school must submit a budget demonstrating financial viability based on September 30 unit count.
5. On or before April 1, 2022 the school must demonstrate 80% enrollment (260). Should enrollment fall between 80% and 90%, the school must submit a budget demonstrating financial viability based on the April 1, 2022 count.

Additionally, if the major modification application is approved, Great Oaks' authorized enrollment will be 325 students.

Ms. Klein asked if there was a motion to recommend approval of Great Oaks' application for a major charter modification. The motion was made and seconded to recommend approval with the conditions noted above and was carried unanimously. Ms. Klein reminded Great Oaks that the CSAC's recommendation was just that, a recommendation to the Secretary of Education on the application to modify its charter.

Next Steps

- A final public hearing will take place, virtually, on June 7th.
- The public comment period ends on June 9th.
- The Secretary of Education will announce her decision at the June 17th State Board of Education meeting and ask the State Board for assent.

