



Academy of Dover

Major Modification Responses to Questions

February 2020

1) Documentation explaining exactly how many applicants the Academy of Dover has received (to date) for the 2020-21 year for all grade levels including the proposed 6th grade.

As of 2/17/2020, we have received the following applications for school choice:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Active</i>	<i>W/D</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>KN</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>01</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>02</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>03</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>04</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>05</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Total:</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>77</i>

In addition to the applications received through Data Service Center's (DSC) online application system, we have also preregistered 7 additional students who did not apply through DSC. (5 kindergarten, 1 first grade, 1 third grade).

20 of our current 5th grade students have submitted official re-enrollment confirmation documents and many others have expressed that they wish their child to stay if 6th grade is approved.

Of our 266 currently enrolled students, we have had 6 tell us they will not be returning in the fall. If all of our other current students remain, and the students who have completed the choice applications also attend, we will have 338 students enrolled, and be at 102% of our enrollment.

2) An outline of a contingency plan if enrollment projections are not reached.

If we do not reach our enrollment projections, we will continue to work diligently to recruit new families. We will continue to utilize online campaigns, which have proved successful for us in this past year. Word of mouth and recommendations from current families have also been very beneficial to our Academy. We currently encourage our families to share their positive experiences with our Academy with neighbors, friends, and families. We will continue to do so and plan to reach out to our current families for their assistance with recruitment and enrollment. We believe that the positive experiences and recommendations of our families is more powerful than any online or paper campaign we can do. This does not mean we will rely solely on our families for recruitment and enrollment. We will continue our efforts in reaching out to the communities within Dover and throughout Kent County to bring in new families by continuing our online presence and reaching out to area child care facilities, attending community events, and visiting neighborhoods.

3) A description of how the recruitment plan has or will be improved to meet these enrollment projections.

We are constantly looking at ways to improve the recruitment and enrollment of new students. One strategy we have employed to increase enrollment is by continuing to accept new students after the September 30th unit count. Families that have enrolled after September 30th have committed to remain with the Academy of Dover for the 2020-2021 school year. By doing so, it has allowed our

enrollment to remain steady even as students have withdrawn, which has long term benefits for our Academy. Our ongoing enrollment efforts include online campaigns via Facebook, flyers, updated website, open house, electronic marquee in front of the building, and word of mouth. Many of our new enrollments have come as a result of word of mouth and recommendations made by our current families. We also have planned a Carnival for this spring that is open to the public. We intend to use this opportunity to recruit new families for enrollment. Through our efforts, we are approaching capacity for some grade levels and will likely be starting a waiting list for certain grade levels.

4) Provide a detailed accounting of what changes were made in your budget to make the change in the contingency reserve.

Upon the Head of School's start in August 2019, one of the priorities was the get a handle on the school's finances. This included determining how staff were funded in the current budget. A thorough review of the prior enrollment and budget was conducted which allowed for revisions to better use our funds. By ensuring that we were fully using our Consolidated Grant funds, as well as other grants, and state funding, we were able to increase our contingency fund significantly. We also looked at how our special education students were funded and ensured that they were given appropriate Needs Based Funding categories. We also worked diligently to properly identify students with disabilities. Being fiscally conservative has remained a top priority for the Academy of Dover, which has helped further build our contingency fund.

5) Provide a Net Position statement for June 2019 that reflects Total Net Deficit and explanation that includes current status of Mosaica settlement.

In prior years, the Academy of Dover has expended a significant amount from our local reserves to reach a crucial financial settlement with Mosaica as mandated by the State of Delaware. A total of \$350,000 was paid in June 2015, a total of \$150,000 in July 2015, \$50,000 in July 2016, \$50,000 in July 2017, and \$50,000 in July 2018 which was the last required payment required to Mosaica. The final payment was made to Mosaica and the settlement is thus closed.

6) Provide a description of efforts to ensure that your student body reflects the demographics of the community that your serve.

We are accepting of all students that enter our doors to enroll at the Academy of Dover. Our current enrollment is 48.7% female and 51.3% male. 11.3% of our students are Hispanic/Latino, 13.2% are Caucasian, and a majority of our students (81.9%) are African American. Our enrollment efforts include online campaigns via Facebook, flyers, updated website, open house, electronic marquee in front of the building, and word of mouth. Many of our new enrollments have come as a result of word of mouth and recommendations made by our current families. A majority of our students come from the Capital School District.

7) Provide a description of activities that you have utilized to share successful practices with other Delaware schools.

Our Head of School is an educational representative on the Behavioral Health Consortium, as well as a member of the Special Education Strategic Plan Advisory Council. Academy of Dover has hosted two SESPAC meetings this school year. We have collaborated with colleagues from other districts, attended the Charter School Conference in October 2019, and collaborate regularly with the Executive Director of the Charter School Network, Kendall Massett. The Academy of Dover welcomes others to visit our Academy to see the amazing things we are doing for our students and their families.

8) A description of what you might attribute the significant decline in student proficiency in ELA and Math from 2018 - 2019?

As a new administrative team at the start of the 2019-2020 school year, the Head of School and the Curriculum and instruction administrator held many conversations with returning staff regarding prior practices, professional development, and supports. One of our first professional development days was focused on a review of past data regarding finances, instruction, curriculum, discipline, and other relevant topics. The entire staff participated in this activity, and this led to a great deal of discussion and understanding of our past as well as our opportunities for our future. Through these conversations, the perception is that there was not enough professional development and instructional supports in place for both novice and experienced teachers. Additionally, staff who have been here shared that the culture of the school has changed significantly with the new leadership into a culture which better fosters relationships with students and their families and also has a much stronger focus on academics.

We recognize that all staff, not just those new to the profession, require ongoing support and professional development. As a result of these initial conversations, as well as ongoing conversations that have taken place throughout the school year, we have put into place many supports for all staff. Adding supports, such as, weekly PLCs, consistent staff meetings, ongoing professional development, teacher feedback, teacher mentoring, and instructional support from our reading and math interventionists, have led to increased teacher capacity. Another change that we felt was crucial to success of our students was to shift the culture within the building. We believe in educating the whole child and taking a village mentality approach. Developing relationships is key to improving student achievement. We believe these supports will lead to improved student achievement.

9) A plan for professional learning to support the implementation of new curricular resources.

As the Academy of Dover moves to EL Education and Engage NY, we plan to provide professional development during the summer months and during our professional development days at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. The Academy has already had an EL Education consultant providing professional development this school year for our teachers transitioning to EL Education. In preparation for the upcoming school-wide transition, we recently held a professional development

session with the consultant for the entire staff in EL Education. We plan to continue professional development into the summer months and throughout the 2020-2021 school year. We plan to also provide ongoing support through weekly PLC meetings, staff meetings, and professional development days through the 2020-2021 school year. We believe it is imperative to provide training and ongoing support for our staff in order for our students to be successful. With the support of our math interventionist, our staff has already begun supplementing our current math curriculum, Go Math, with Engage NY materials. This has allowed our staff to become familiar with the layout and materials from Engage NY. In order to continue to support our staff with the transition to Engage NY, we plan to provide professional development during the summer and again at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. We will also provide ongoing support to the staff through weekly PLCs, staff meetings, and professional development days throughout the 2020-2021 school year.

10) Evidence of a written Social Studies curriculum aligned to the Delaware Social Studies Standards for grade 6.

The Academy of Dover is currently using the Delaware Recommended Social Studies curriculum in grades kindergarten through 5th grade. If approved, 6th grade will also utilize the Delaware Recommended Social Studies curriculum. Our staff accesses these resources through the DOE Social Studies Schoology group.

11) A Minor Modification application to increase enrollment.

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)	
X	Enrollment change (increase or decrease) between 5 and 15%		Performance Agreement Section A only
	Change agreement with EMO/CMO		Enrollment change (increase or decrease) of greater than 15% Section B

	Start date (one-time) delay	Grade configuration (adding grade levels or reducing grade levels) Section C
	Name of charter school	Educational Program (i.e. curriculum) Section D
	Existing or planned school facilities or structures (including any plan to use temporary or modular structures)	Mission (includes At-Risk designation) Section E
	Change in terms to current site facility arrangement (i.e. lease to purchase)	Replace, remove, or add EMO/CMO, or transfer of authorizer Section F
	Educator Evaluation Process	Enrollment preferences Section G
	A change to the current authorized number of hours, either daily or annually, devoted to actual school sessions.	Location change Section H
	Other	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.

At this time, Academy of Dover wishes to modify the current charter to increase the grade span from k-5 to k-6, and to increase enrollment to 330 students. The current charter is approved for k-5 with enrollment of 300 students, which can be found on the currently approved charter, on pages 4 and 16.

The Academy of Dover Charter School at 104 Saulsbury Road, Dover opened in September 2003 growing to serve students in kindergarten through sixth grade by the 2006-2007 school year. During the 2007-2008 school year, the school reduced its grade configuration to kindergarten through fourth grade with the total approved enrollment of 325 students with the plan to increase to 393 students by school year 2011-12. In 2010, the school’s Board of Directors submitted an application to modify the school’s charter seeking approval to decrease the approved enrollment from 384 students to 300 students in k-4 through 2013-2014. A few years later, the charter was amended to become a kindergarten through fifth grade school.

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

The effective date of the proposed modification is the 2020/2021 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.

Academic Performance

Based on the new Delaware Report Card, the Academy has received an overall rating of Approaching Expectations for the 2018-2019 school year. (See Appendix A).

Overall: Approaching Expectations

Academic Achievement: Approaching Expectations

ELA Proficiency: 49.6%

Math Proficiency: 39.2%

On-track Attendance: 90.35%

There is no question that education is a powerful driver of prosperity. Research shows that Americans with college degrees earn 117 percent more per year than those who do not complete high school. Moreover, to enrich and support our local and state community, citizens with higher levels of education are more likely to vote, to volunteer, and to donate to charity.

The Academy of Dover Charter School seeks to provide the elements of high-quality academic instruction for all students. The purpose of the charter school is to advance the Academy's vision for excellence and diversity which meets the needs of our community. These elements include 100% credentialed teachers, standards-based accountability for our school, teacher evaluations based partly on student learning, culturally aware staff, and a trauma informed school. In addition, the Academy, maintains small class sizes, provides instructional support paraprofessionals in K-3, and instructional specialists for reading and math. These ideals have directly supported the Academy showing academic progress which exceeds our local school district's overall performance.

It is also important to our current administration and staff to understand and learn from the lessons of past efforts; therefore, we wish to improve and enrich the overall experience of our students and their families by taking a holistic approach to education. The Academy provides free breakfast and lunch to all students, implements PBIS, and has an in-house Family Crisis Therapist. Moreover, on-staff we have a social worker, behavior specialist, and before and after care through the Boys and Girls Club to provide for student and family needs. The expansion of public school choice options at the 6th grade level will continue to provide the opportunity for parents to choose the Academy.

The Academy strongly holds and is in keeping with federal and state level policymakers and advocates who push for major changes to the educational system based on these ideas.

Financial Viability

While we are very aware and acknowledge that the most recent audit, completed June 30, 2019, shows some concerning results in the Financial Performance Framework, we also know that our course corrections over the past few months and the charter modification will be significant in our future financial viability. One factor that has had a longstanding and major effect on a number of the financial frameworks for the Academy is the Mosaica Settlement. This debt has now been paid in full from the local reserves, which will have a significant impact on the local funds.

The Current assets to liabilities ratio result is .79, which is far below the standard. Part of this is due to the Academy being housed in a rented facility. With this charter modification, the current facility, although remaining rented, will be adequate in size to meet the increased grade span request, thus not changing the liabilities proportion of the Academy.

The Unrestricted Days Cash as of the June 30, 2019 audit meets the standard, and will only be positively impacted by the charter modification.

The Enrollment Variance result as of June 30, 2019 is 90% and approaching the standard. Since June 30, 2019, a myriad of enrollment and recruitment methods have been employed that have achieved an increase in enrollment and an upward trend. Examples of these methods have included the following: Accepting students after the September 30th count, on-line campaign through Facebook advertising, flyers, updated web page, open house, electronic marquee in front of school, and word-of-mouth. Additionally, in a recent telephone survey of the 4th and 5th grade parents, all but 5 of those called responded that they were in favor of having their child(ren) remain in the Academy through the 6th grade- should the modification be approved.

Total Margin and Debt to Asset Ratio were both found to meet the standard.

The cash flow for the three-year period has been negative, resulting in a metric rating of far below standard. Since the audit report, there have been concerted efforts with the budget to fix this concern and meet this standard. The July 31, 2019 board approved budget shows a reserve amount of \$67,320.01, while the October 31, 2019 board approved budget now has increased the contingency reserve to \$258,056.18 with an additional \$33,883.16 in additional unallocated funds. While this is not where it needs to be, it is significantly higher than it was in a short amount of time, and trending in the right direction; this remains a focus of the Academy. The charter modification agreement will significantly impact this and will further enable the Academy to meet the standard of having a positive cash flow each year.

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)

The Academy of Dover approved charter is for a grade configuration of kindergarten through 5th Grade. The Academy wishes to expand vertically by adding Grade 6 in order to support and provide students a more natural transition to the middle grades.

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of our currently polled 4th and 5th grade parents have responded with positive feedback to having their child remain in attendance through the 6th grade. In addition, parents of students in lower grades have also expressed interest in their children attending the Academy through 6th grade. Some of our current families have shared that they are interested in enrolling their other children at the Academy as well.

(See Appendix B)

The current configuration of the Academy is contrary to the surrounding schools. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of our current student population is from the Capital School District, resulting in our students having to go to a new school for just 6th grade. By having an option of 6th grade within our Academy, our students will have a more natural transition into secondary school.

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.

This modification will have a positive impact on student achievement because students will have greater consistency during their k-6 experience. Some studies, and feedback from parents, share that placing sixth graders in middle school will expose students to older teens which may have a negative influence on them, which can include higher disciplinary rates and lower test scores than their sixth grade peers who remained in elementary school. Researchers at Duke and University of California, Berkeley show children in the sixth grade are at a point in their lives when they are easily influenced by their peers. Keeping the sixth graders in elementary school gives them another year to mature before they are exposed to older adolescents. Many parents and teachers believe that our Academy sixth graders will do better to remain in a smaller, more nurturing setting where there are fewer classmates and more one-on-one contact with their teacher/s. Therefore, this additional year will provide students the time needed to be both academically and emotionally ready for the middle school transition.

(See Appendix C)

This modification will also have a positive impact on staffing and facilities because it will allow us to maximize our current resources, both in terms of staffing and space. Through our modification, we will be fully using the entire space that we are leasing, thus getting the full economic impact. Therefore, this expansion will have a positive impact on our financial viability due to the benefits of serving additional students in our current facility, while only having to adjust our staffing slightly to meet the instructional needs of our additional students. Our current staffing of school operations, curriculum specialists, special education, school nutrition, related arts, and transportation supports will remain the same while being able to support kindergarten through sixth grade students in our Academy.

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.

While we are very aware and acknowledge that the most recent audit, completed June 30, 2019, shows some concerning results in the Financial Performance Framework, we also know that our course corrections over the past few months and the charter modification will be significant in our future financial viability. One factor that has had a longstanding and major effect on a number of the financial frameworks for the Academy is the Mosaica Settlement. This debt has been paid in full as of the beginning of this Fiscal Year, from the local reserves, and will also have a significant impact on the local funds.

Since the audit report, there have been concerted efforts with the budget to fix this concern and meet this standard. The July 31, 2019 board approved budget shows a reserve amount of \$67,320.01, while the October 31, 2019 board approved budget now has increased the contingency reserve to \$258,056.18 with an additional \$33,883.16 in additional unallocated funds. While this is not where it needs to be, it is significantly higher than it was in a short amount of time and trending in the right direction. This remains a focus of the Academy. The charter modification agreement will significantly impact this and will further enable the Academy to meet the standard of having a positive cash flow each year, and positively affect our future financial position.

Projected Enrollment

a. Provide a five-year enrollment chart by grade level, in the prescribed format below. Ensure that the chart allows for the natural progression of students from year-to-year.

Note: This will become the school’s authorized enrollment if the modification application is approved.

Projected Enrollment						
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
K	45	44	44	44	44	44
Grade 1	47	46	44	44	44	44
Grade 2	56	48	46	44	44	44
Grade 3	30	55	48	46	44	44
Grade 4	43	37	55	50	49	51
Grade 5	45	50	43	55	50	52
Grade 6		50	50	47	55	51
Total	266	330	330	330	330	330