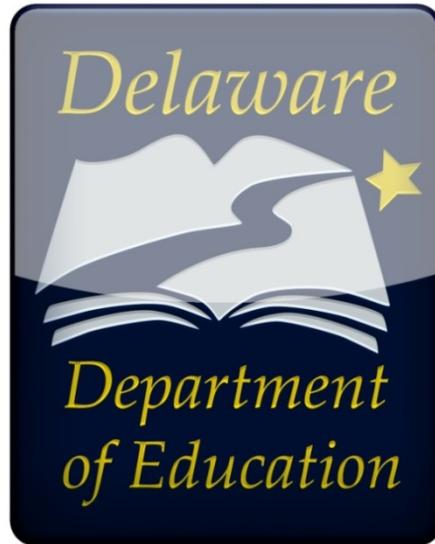


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Newark Charter School

**MAJOR MODIFICATION APPLICATION
FINAL REPORT**

CSAC Meeting: February 27, 2020
CSAC Report Published: March 5, 2020

On December 31, 2019, Newark Charter School (NCS) submitted an application for a major modification of its charter.

The following individuals attended the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) on February 27, 2020:

Voting Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- Chuck Longfellow, Ed.D., Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee, and Associate Secretary, Operations Support, DDOE
- Susan Veenema, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Brian Moore, Education Associate, School Climate and Discipline, DDOE
- Gregory Fulkerson, Ph.D., Education Associate, Language Acquisition, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, CTE / STEM initiatives, DDOE
- James Pennewell, Education Associate, Capital Project Management, DDOE
- Cathy Wolfe, Education Associate, Federal Funds / LEA Indirect Costs, DDOE
- Charles Taylor, Community Member, Retired Head of School

Non-voting Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- Audrey Noble, Ph.D., Vice President, Delaware State Board of Education

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Darryl Parson, Deputy Attorney General, Department of Justice, Counsel to the Committee
- Leroy Travers, Lead Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Finance Office, DDOE
- Jennifer Roussell, Administrative Secretary, Operations Support, DDOE
- Alicia Balcerak, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office, DDOE

Representatives of Newark Charter School

- Adrian Soyer, Chairman, Board of Directors
- Kelly Boulden, Vice Chair, Board of Directors
- Karen White, Secretary, Board of Directors
- Franklin Newton, Ph.D., School Director
- Jill Scannell, Director of Learning Support
- Sharon Dorr, Director of Development

Dr. Longfellow stated this was the Final Meeting of the CSAC relative to the Major Modification Application submitted by NCS. NCS applied for a modification to its charter to:

- Incrementally increase its approved enrollment from 2,470 to 3,155 by school year 2025-26 (685 students or 28%).

- Build a Junior High School on land currently owned by the school.
- Renovate their current Primary and Intermediate Schools with an addition, and renovate the physical activity and athletic field spaces on both campuses to meet their enhanced needs.

The CSAC initial report was issued on January 31, 2020 and the school submitted a timely response. An initial public hearing was held on February 10, 2020. Dr. Longfellow stated that the purpose of the meeting was for the CSAC to discuss the Major Modification Application with the applicant, ask questions, and to further probe areas of concern based on the CSAC's initial review of the written application and feedback from the initial report, and to issue its recommendation on the application. Mr. Longfellow announced that the Department will issue the final report no later than March 5, 2020.

Discussion:

Dr. Longfellow stated that, in its initial report, the CSAC requested the following information from the school:

1. A more complete, data-supported answer to question 2 in Section B related to impacts of the expansion on surrounding Delaware schools.
2. A detailed recruitment plan that will illustrate the school's commitment to serve a more representative sample of students from their community.
3. A description of activities that the school has utilized to share successful practices with other Delaware schools
4. A plan to address a scenario in which the Christina operating referendum scheduled for June 9, 2020 does not pass, to include:
 - a. The projected impact on NCS finances (estimated dollar amount and when)?
 - b. What steps will NCS take to mitigate that risk?

Dr. Longfellow asked if there were additional questions or comments regarding the items submitted by the school in their response.

Dr. Noble asked about the school's recruitment plan and asked the school to provide more information about their outreach plan. The school stated, in their response to the initial report, that this issue was brought forth by the Secretary of Education in 2012 and the school set targets over a five-year period to increase the diversity of the school. Dr. Noble asked to see the plan developed in 2012 and the full report on the progress of the plan delivered to the Secretary in 2013 and asked that a copy be provided by the State Board. The full plan is posted on the Charter School Office's website at <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/4068> and the follow-up report is posted at <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/4068>.

Dr. Noble stated that she had concerns with page 6 of the school's response to the initial report. She asked how the school defined "low-income" students. Dr. Newton explained that their data

includes students that receive free or reduced lunch, but are not necessarily classified as low-income by the State. Due to this, the low-income percentage cited by the school is slightly higher than what is reported by the State.

Mr. Taylor asked why the school's diversity plan was relevant to the Major Modification Application as it pertains to Chapter V, Title 14 of Delaware Code. Mr. Parson explained that the question had no bearing on the approval or disapproval of the application, but the question was brought forth by the State Board. The school now has the opportunity to respond to the question. Mr. Parson explained that impact is not to be considered when voting for or against the Major Modification application.

Dr. Noble explained that the State Board is interested in how well charter schools are serving the populations within their communities and whether or not the schools are representative of the communities they serve. Dr. Newton pointed out the school's demographics, submitted in the school's initial report response, highlights the growth in the school's diversity since the school's opening.

Dr. Noble asked for clarification regarding the school's federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant. Dr. Noble noted that the CSP grant was not to be used for construction. However, she added, the school cited the CSP grant as the source of funds for construction and renovation projects. Dr. Newton explained that they have had conversations with Mr. Travers, as well as representatives from the United States Department of Education (USDOE) regarding allowable costs parameters for the CSP grant. Particular construction projects, such as those that bring current structures in to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are allowable. Mr. Travers stated that he is working with the school and the USDOE to ensure that only allowable expenses are funded by the CSP grant and those that are not are amended and/or recoded by NCS.

Conclusion:

The criteria for approving a modification to a charter are set forth in 14 *Del. C.* § 512. The criteria include that the charter school's educational objectives are consistent with the legislative intent of and restrictions set forth in Title 14, Chapter 5 of the Delaware Code; the charter school's educational program has the potential to improve student performance; the plan for the charter school is economically viable; the charter school's financial and administrative operations meet or exceed the same standards, procedures, and requirements as a school district; and the charter school's procedures to assure students', employees', and guests' health and safety are adequate.

Dr. Longfellow asked if there was a motion to recommend approval of NCS' application to modify its charter. The motion was made and seconded to recommend approval without any conditions and was carried unanimously.

Dr. Longfellow reminded the school that the CSAC's recommendation was just that: a recommendation to the Secretary of Education on the application to modify its charter.

Next Steps

- On or before, March 5, 2020 the CSAC will issue a Final Report, which will include its recommendation on the Major Modification Application.
- A second and Final Public Hearing will be held on March 9 at 5:00p at the Carvel State Building, 820 N French St., Wilmington, DE 19801, 3rd Floor Conference Room.
- The public comment period ends on March 12, 2020.
- The Secretary of Education will announce her decision at the March 19, 2020 State Board of Education meeting.