



Odyssey Charter School

Nurturing a Lifelong Love of Learning

**Barley Mill Plaza, Building 22
4319 Lancaster Pike
Wilmington, DE 19805**

To: DE Department of Education
Charter School Office
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901

cc: Odyssey Board of Directors
Innovative Schools

Odyssey Charter School (OCS) formally requests a minor modification to the OCS Charter to increase our currently approved student enrollment numbers. The changes allow for increased financial stability for the school while leveraging our stronger elementary and middle school programs. The proposed slightly modified enrollment targets (less than 15%) allow the school to grow in a way that makes sense for our students and the operations of our school. These changes would also allow more children to start in the beginning of our program and reap the benefits of longer amounts of time in our unique dual language curriculum.

This minor modification request adds to the enrollment for our Kindergarten (K) through 6th grades and reduces in students in 7th through 9th grades. Specifically, we are requesting that OCS be authorized to increase the number of class sections at each grade level, for the grades K through 4th, from six to seven classes each. Additionally, OCS proposes to increase the student enrollment in each class, for grades K through 6th, by one student per class for a total of 23 students per class. With adding an additional class per grade and increasing the student enrollment by one student per class, each K- 4 grade level will see an increase of 29 students. Grades 5 and 6 enrollment targets are being increased by 6 students each, while 7th, 8th and 9th grade targets would be reduced by 16, 5, and 6 students respectively.

The above strategy creates fewer transitions for children and allows them to acclimate to the academic rigor and nurturing culture at OCS earlier. The proposed enrollment numbers have also been adjusted in a way that will enable us to better accommodate choice demand for seats in our classrooms. By building out our lower grade levels, OCS responds to market demand and leverages organic growth as students matriculate through the elementary, middle and high school programs. We believe that the restructured enrollment numbers are realistic, achievable and effective for our children, families, staff and the Delaware public school community.

OCS appreciates the DOE Charter Office’s timely consideration of this minor charter modification request and we thank you for your continued support of Odyssey Charter School, its students, and their promising future. If there is a need for additional information or to answer any questions you may have, please feel free to contact Nick Manolakos at OCS and Riccardo Stoeckicht (of Innovative Schools) at your earliest convenience.

Best regards,



George Chambers
Board President (pro bono)
Odyssey Charter School
www.odysseycharterschooldel.com
302-655-5760





Odyssey Charter School
Nurturing a Lifelong Love of Learning

Odyssey Charter School Application for Minor Modification

12/29/2015

Introduction

Odyssey Charter School (OCS) hereby requests a minor modification to the OCS Charter for approval to increase our currently approved student enrollment numbers. The changes allow for increased financial stability for the school while leveraging our stronger elementary and middle school programs. These slightly modified enrollment targets (less than 15%) allow the school to grow in a way that makes sense for our students and the operations of our school. We believe that the restructured enrollment numbers are realistic, achievable and effective for our children, families, staff and the Delaware public school community.

Responses to Section A: Core Questions

1. What modification does the school's Board of Directors wish 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 wishes 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.

On December 18, 2014, Odyssey Charter School received charter renewal from the DE Board of Education for a 5 year term. In that renewal process, the following conditions were placed on the school for remediation:

- 1) The school's bylaws shall be brought into compliance with State law as it relates to the public nature of the Executive Committee and attendance procedures at all public meetings by the close of business on December 10, 2014;
- 2) The CBOC shall be brought into compliance with State law as it relates to membership by the close of business on December 31, 2014; and
- 3) All Board members shall participate in training provided by the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement and the Public Integrity Commission by February 28, 2015.

As required, OCS complied with these conditions and the DE Department of Education reported they were satisfied.

In December 2015, OCS requests a modification to our enrollment numbers starting in the 2016-2017 school year. The current enrollment structure is found on page 9 of our renewal application. Overall, we are seeking approval to raise our long term K-12 enrollment from 1716 to 1972 students, a total of 256 children, or a 14.92% increase. In 2016-2017, we seek to add 130 students over our current approved enrollment for the year. A full waterfall view of our increased enrollment over six years is provided in Appendix A

Specifically, as reflected in the below chart, we request an increase in student enrollment for our Kindergarten (K) – 6th grades, and a reduction in 7th through 9th. This will increase the number of class sections at each grade level in K-4 from six to seven. Additionally, OCS will be increasing the student enrollment in each class by one student per class, for a total of 23 students per class in grades K-6. By adding one additional class per grade and increasing the student enrollment by one student per class,

each K- 4 grade level will see an increase of 29 students as reflected in the chart below. Grades 5 and 6 enrollment targets are being increased by 6 students each, while 7th, 8th and 9th grade targets are being reduced by 16, 5 and 6 students respectively.

YEAR ONE: enrollment request for 2016 – 2017 (See Appendix A1 for 6-year waterfall and Appendix A2 for the long term, full enrollment waterfall)

Grade level	Current enrollment	Requested enrollment	Number of additional students
K	132	161	+ 29
1	132	161	+ 29
2	132	161	+ 29
3	132	161	+ 29
4	132	161	+ 29
5	132	138	+ 6
6	132	138	+ 6
7	132	116	-16
8	120	115	-5
9	110	104	-6

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

This modification is requested immediately to be effective July 1, 2016, and has practical consequences for our 2016 - 2017 enrollment process. OCS will continue its lottery for grades that are over enrolled by January 13th and will need to know our maximum numbers to communicate accurately with families during the current choice season currently underway.

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

Academic Performance

Odyssey’s commitment to student achievement is reflected in our outstanding academic performance. Through our pioneering “Foreign Language in the Elementary School” (FLES) program and refined core curriculum methodology, Odyssey has delivered strong academic achievement among an ethnically diverse student population.

Odyssey offers an innovative approach though instruction in a second language, Greek, together with an emphasis in mathematics. The Greek language also aligns with the fundamentals of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Odyssey Charter School employs Delaware certified teachers to instruct the core subject areas. In addition students participate in two Greek classes per day: a foreign language class and a second unit of mathematics taught in Greek. These exclusive features of

Odyssey Charter School are provided by credentialed instructors from Greece and American teachers fluent in Greek.

Since 2011, Odyssey Charter School has met or exceeded the standard in all measures included in the DOE Charter School Academic Framework. Measures such as Student Progress over Time, Student Achievement Status, and School Annual Yearly Progress were consistently met and frequently exceeded at OCS.

More recently Odyssey's students performed very well on the first Smarter Balanced Assessment in the spring of 2015. In reading, students in grades 3 - 7 scored an average proficiency rate of 74.2%, compared to the state average of 48.8%. In mathematics, students scored an average proficiency rate of 70.0%, compared to the state average of 42.5%.

Compliance

OCS met 9 of the 13 DOE organizational framework measures, did not meet 3, and one measure did not apply. The OCS overall rating was Does Not Meet. However, since the reporting of these findings, every area in need of improvement has been completely rectified and subsequent follow-ups by the DOE have determined that the school is in compliance. The findings, while unfortunate, led to many positive changes within our organization. These include adherence to FOIA regulations in all school processes and communications, updating the OCS by-laws, a specific succession plan for the school's Board of Directors, and a reformation of the school's Citizens Budget Oversight Committee.

Financial Viability

In 2015 Odyssey acquired a portion of Barley Mill Plaza as the permanent campus for our unified K-12 program. The campus is situated on approximately 36 acres with 8 buildings. The Lower School (K-3) is housed in building #20, the Upper School (4-8) is located in building #22 and the high school (9-12) will be in building #21. Two of the buildings were torn down, and athletic fields were created in their place.

To acquire the Barley Mill property parcel and associated buildings, a tax-free municipal bond was issued in February 2015 through the Delaware Economic Development Authority. Due to the accounting treatment required for the bond our performance framework, financial ratings related to cash-on-hand and debt coverage ratio measures for the year 2015 were impacted. To address those gaps, the OCS Board has strengthened its internal controls, financial reporting and budgeting processes over the past 8 months. Our full attention is geared to meeting DOE performance expectations, and recent actions include:

- A 12-month cash flow benchmark to assess, on a monthly basis, our financial performance against our approved annual budget
- On-going value engineering to optimize capital expenditures
- Revenue enhancement strategies to maximize school assets
- Assessment of existing operations to ensure they are streamlined, effective and efficient

It should be noted that all building renovations and improvements financed through the bond issue have been completed on schedule and under budget.

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

There are many benefits to granting OCS additional enrollment, and this growth makes good sense for the long-term stability of OCS, its students, their families and our staff. Odyssey continues to receive many applications for the elementary and middle school programs, particularly in New Castle County where support is strong. There are many more students who would like to enroll at OCS than our current charter allows. Last year, we had over 1,100 students on our waiting list for grades K-8. These students were turned away simply because they drew a higher number in our lottery.

The requested changes in enrollment numbers would allow more children to start in the beginning of our program and reap the benefits of longer amounts of time in our unique dual language program. This strategy creates fewer transitions for children and allows them to acclimate to the “Odyssey Way” starting at earlier grade levels. The proposed enrollment numbers have been adjusted in a way that will enable us to better accommodate choice demand for seats in our classrooms. By building out our lower grade levels, OCS responds to market demand and leverages organic growth as students matriculate through the elementary, middle and high school programs.

While OCS enjoys significant academic success, it is still a relatively young school that has yet to reach its full capacity. Our existing charter sets out that we will grow into a complete K-12 configuration by 2020. In the upcoming 2016-2017 school year, we will introduce our high school program through our inaugural 9th grade.

Increasing enrollment allows us to add additional classrooms and staff required to complete our staffing projections. Odyssey currently employs 59 core content teachers, 18 Greek instructors, 21 specialists, 6 administrators, 7.5 paraprofessionals and 21 operations employees for a total of 132.5 staff members. To launch our new high school, we must make a significant investment to support a wide-range of additional core and elective staff and programming. The increased revenue from our slightly adjusted student count will allow us to find well-qualified staff more easily and offer a well-rounded program.

Granting additional enrollment will also improve our financial position. With these students come additional funds that will support our fiscal viability. It will allow us to appropriately manage our debt for the new campus at Barley Mill Plaza. The increased funding will be used in a comprehensive manner to provide additional requisite cash reserves as well as support the completion of our newly-unified campus and approved k-12 configuration. An on-going program of revenue enhancement and cost management, will ensure long term financial viability for the school.

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

The desired increase in student enrollment will not negatively impact the operations of the school. It will, in fact, have a positive impact. The newly acquired Barley Mill buildings represent an expansive campus for OCS so the proposed growth will not impact the facility operations. We have carefully mapped out the number of children that we can serve effectively within it and we have that required space available. This operational change also will not impact student achievement. If anything, we believe that having additional enrollment will allow for more teacher collaboration and thus will positively impact student achievement. However, this change will impact our financial viability in a positive way. A detailed account of how this will impact our financial viability is reflected in the attached budget (*See Appendix B1 for Budget and Appendix B2 for Budget Narrative*).

The enrollment increases are designed to create a positive impact on the school's facilities, financial viability, and staffing operations. Building out additional sections in our lower grades will take advantage of available footage in Building #20, home to our Lower School students. The enrollment adjustments will require minimal renovations, thus making for a sound return-on-investment. In addition, with the addition of ninth grade, Odyssey will take advantage of its investment in Building #21, which will house grades 9 through 12. The strategic waterfall of students in the high school grades allows the school to maximize staffing while renovating Building #21 incrementally. The school's administration guides and supports the expansion through continued use of site-based management, the creation of small teams in grades K-4 and content-area specific PLCs in grades 5-9.

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 attached budget shows how the additional students will impact the financial operations of the school (*See Appendix B1 for Budget and Appendix B2 for Budget Narrative*). Opening with more children allows OCS increased financial security. One of the benefits to increasing our enrollment is the increased funding. The decision to slightly increase the enrollment at select grade levels has been done carefully and purposefully. We believe that this minor modification is a wise decision financially for the success of its students and the viability of the entire school community.

In addition, please find attached in Appendix C the state and local revenue calculation spreadsheets referring to the 2017 – 2022 period (the six years referenced in this application). The budget projections are based on revenue projections for the 2017 to 2020 period (four years).

Appendix A – OCS Six Year Enrollment Waterfall

Enrollment Numbers – Years One through Six

	Approved Enrollment	Requested Enrollment	Proposed Increases
Year 1: 2016 - 2017	1,286	1,416	130
Year 2: 2017 - 2018	1,452	1,582	130
Year 3: 2018 - 2019	1,584	1,734	150
Year 4: 2019 - 2020	1,716	1,892	176
Year 5: 2020 - 2021	1,716	1,946	230
Year 6 and Beyond: 2021 - 2022	1,716	1,972	256

OCS Enrollment Waterfall: SY 2017 – 2022

APPENDIX A									
OCS Enrollment and Projections with Minor (< 15%) Charter Modification									
Existing Charter Student Totals		Proposed Modification and Projected Student Totals							
School Year	2015-16			2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Grade	Current Enrollment	Approved Renewal 2016- 2017 Enrollment	Approved Renewal - Final Enrollment	Proj Enrollment					
Kindergarten	135	132	132	161	161	161	161	161	161
First Grade	136	132	132	161	161	161	161	161	161
Second Grade	138	132	132	161	161	161	161	161	161
Third Grade	138	132	132	161	161	161	161	161	161
Fourth Grade	138	132	132	161	161	161	161	161	161
Fifth Grade	134	132	132	138	161	161	161	161	161
Sixth Grade	116	132	132	138	132	132	154	154	154
Seventh Grade	115	132	132	116	132	132	132	154	154
Eighth Grade	111	120	132	115	116	132	132	132	154
Ninth Grade		110	132	104	132	136	136	136	136
Tenth Grade			132		104	132	136	136	136
Eleventh Grade			132			104	132	136	136
Twelfth Grade			132				104	132	136
Enrollment Totals	1161	1286	1716	1416	1582	1,734	1,892	1,946	1,972
Student Net Gain from existing Charter				130	130	150	176	230	256
Percentage Increase									14.92%