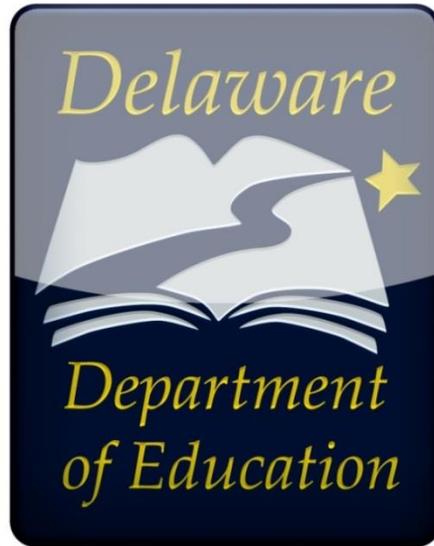


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Prestige Academy

MAJOR MODIFICATION APPLICATION FINAL REPORT

CSAC Initial Meeting: February 23, 2016
CSAC Initial Report Published: February 25, 2016

On December 31, 2015 Prestige Academy submitted an application for a major modification of its charter.

The following were in attendance at the Final Meeting of the CSAC on February 23, 2016:

Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- David Blowman, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Associate Secretary, Financial Management and Operations, DDOE
- Karen Field Rogers, Deputy Secretary, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Chuck Taylor, Head of School, Providence Creek Academy
- Deborah Wilson, Community Representative

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee
- Jennifer Nagourney, Executive Director, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE

Representatives of Prestige Academy

- Don Mell, Board Chair
- Cordie Greenlea, Executive Director
- Sylvia Simmons, Educational Diagnostician

Discussion

The following was discussed:

- Summary of request – Prestige Academy has applied for a modification to change its grade configuration (eliminate grade 5 and serve grades 6-8), change the number of approved students, and the number of instructional days in the school calendar. The school stated that the request is one part of a broader strategy and series of school-wide actions to improve student performance.
- Student enrollment – The school responded that it currently has 34 student applications for next year. The school indicated that it is recruiting by sharing information about positive things happening at the school, including the new STEM pathways, student supports. The school indicated that they just sent out a large mailing and continue to receive calls from prospective parents interested in visiting the school.
- Professional development plan – The CSAC stated that the professional development plan evidenced a strong strategy, including monthly themes for professional development, bringing in experts to speak to staff, and connecting the professional development sessions to work in Professional Learning Communities. The CSAC also noted a concern that the plans did not indicate an overarching goal for those sessions. The school noted that leadership has communicated to school staff that strengthening the school climate and culture is the highest priority, particularly building trust with students who may find it difficult to trust adults. The school noted that many changes were put in place at the same time, which caused some confusion, and that the school is working with teachers and staff to make sure the priorities are clear.
- Student performance data – The CSAC noted that the performance data showed academic improvement. The school noted that it was looking at performance data in detail and in context of other factors that might influence performance, including trauma and the time the student spent on the test. The school stated that they are working with students to prepare them for the spring exam period.
- New school leadership – The school noted that the current school leader has been in place since July, and that the process of changing the school vision and operations is a long one. The school also noted that the number of changes made over the school over the last year had made it more difficult for teachers to buy-in. The CSAC noted that while it will take a long time for the school's efforts to translate into results, it seemed to be on the right path.

Conclusion:

Mr. Blowman asked if there were any additional questions about any section of the application. None were noted.

A motion was made and seconded that the Major Modification Application be recommended for approval. All six voting CSAC members voted “yes” in favor of a recommendation for approval.

Next Steps:

- A second and final public hearing will take place on March 7, 2016, in the 3rd Floor Conference Room in the Carvel State Office Building, which is located at 820 N. French St., Wilmington, Delaware, beginning at 5:00 p.m.
- The public comment period and record will close on March 11, 2016.
- The Secretary of Education will announce his decision at the regular meeting of the State Board of Education on March 17, 2016.