

# CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## Reach Academy for Girls

**RENEWAL APPLICATION  
FINAL REPORT**

CSAC Final Meeting: November 17, 2014  
CSAC Final Report Published: November 24, 2014

By September 30, 2014, Reach Academy for Girls submitted an application to renew its charter. Consideration of this application is in accordance with the applicable provisions of 14 *Del. C.* § 514A and 14 DE Admin. Code § 275. Written renewal application guidance is provided by the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) on its website. The renewal application template developed by DDOE is aligned to measures and targets within the Performance Framework, which outlines the academic, organizational and fiscal standards by which all Delaware charter schools are evaluated. The evaluation of the school's performance as measured by the Framework is a major component of the decision on the renewal application. The decision on the renewal application is based on a comprehensive review, guided, in part, by the following three questions:

1. Is the academic program a success?
2. Is the school financially viable?
3. Is the school organizationally sound?

This report serves as a summary of the strengths, areas of follow-up, and/or concerns identified by members of the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) during their individual reviews of the charter applicant's renewal application, Performance Review Reports, Annual Reports and Performance Agreements and during the CSAC meetings.

The following were in attendance at the Final Meeting of the CSAC on November 17, 2014:

**Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee**

- David Blowman, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Deputy Secretary, DDOE
- Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE
- Atnre Alleyne, Director of Talent Management, Leadership and Educator Effectiveness, Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU), DDOE
- Charles Taylor, Community Member and Former Charter School Leader

**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
- Jennifer Carlson, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Michelle Whalen, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE

**Ex-Officio Members (Non-voting)**

- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter School Network
- Donna Johnson, Executive Director, Delaware State Board of Education

**Representatives of Charter School**

- Tara Allen, School Leader
- Denise Luce, Instructional Coach
- Maria Banks, Instructional Coach
- Carol Roth, Board Member
- Maureen Thomas, Business Manager
- Blase Maitland, Assistant Principal
- Rev. Canon Lloyd S. Casson, Board President
- Danny N. Schweers, Board Member
- Duane Werb, Legal Consultant

## Performance Framework Ratings Summary

### Rating Scales

Academic	Financial	Organizational
E = Exceeds Standard (89-100)	M = Meets Standard	M = Meets Standard
M = Meets Standard (63-88)	D = Does Not Meet Standard	
D = Does Not Meet Standard (39-62)	F = Falls Far Below	DNM = Does Not Meet Standard
F = Falls Far Below Standard (Below 39)		

### Academic

Year	1.a. Growth		1.b. Bottom 25%		1.c. Growth to Prof		2.a. Prof		2.b. Overall Subgroup		2.c. District		2.d. Similar Schools		3.a. AYP	4.a. SAT	4.b. Grad Rate	5.a. Mission Specific	OVERALL RATING/SCORE	
	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA						
10-11	F	F	D	F	F	F	F	F	D	D	F	F	F	D	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	F	32.2
11-12	F	D	D	D	F	M	F	F	F	D	F	F	F	D	D	N/A	N/A	N/A	D	39.4
12-13	F	F	F	F	F	D	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	D	N/A	N/A	N/A	F	28.4
13-14	F	D	D	D	D	D	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	N/A	N/A	N/A	D	39.1

### Financial

Year	1.a.	1.b.	1.c.	1.d.	2.a.	2.b.	2.c.	2.d.	OVERALL RATING
10-11	D	D	D	M	NR	M	NR	NA	D
11-12	M	M	F	M	NR	M	NR	NA	D
12-13	M	M	D	M	M	M	M	NA	M
13-14	M	M	M	M	D	M	D	NA	M

### Organizational

Year	1.a.	1.b.	2	3.a.	3.b.	3.c.	4.a.	4.b.	4.c.	4.d.	5.a.	5.b.	6	OVERALL RATING
11-12	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	N/A	M	M	M	M	Meets
12-13	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	DNM	DNM	M	M	M	M	Meets
13-14	M	M	DNM	M	M	M	M	M	DNM	M	M	M	M	Meets

## Discussion

Mr. Blowman noted for the record that, at the Initial CSAC Meeting on October 15, 2014, the CSAC indicated that the Financial Framework of the renewal application met standard, whereas the Academic Framework and the math curriculum component of the Organizational Framework sections did not meet standard.

Mr. Blowman reported that the DDOE's Curriculum and Instruction Workgroup had reviewed the school's revised math submission and concluded that the revised submission meets approval.

Mr. Blowman noted that the CSAC requested the following items in order to inform its decision-making:

- Plan for students with disabilities; and
- Plan for science and social studies.

Mr. Blowman acknowledged that the CSAC had received the requested items and asked the CSAC members whether the supplemental information prompted any comments, questions, or feedback.

Ms. Mazza stated that she did not have any questions regarding the school's plan for Students with Disabilities.

Ms. McCrae then confirmed receipt of the school's plan for Science and Social Studies and made several comments. She commended the school for its participation in the Science and Social Studies Coalitions, as well as the school's partnerships with community programs and the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). She stated that she noticed either a misunderstanding about or a failure to include information about Next Generation Science Standards and their incorporation into the school's Science instruction. She noted that the language used in the school's description did not necessarily mesh with the language that goes along with Next Generation Science Standards. She referred the school to the Framework for K-12 Science Education and the Next Generation Science Standards as resources. With respect to Social Studies, she noted that it wasn't clear how the school was working with its sources in conducting its Social Studies research. She stated that she wanted to ensure that the school was using the Common Core as a source of reflection as it works through the Social Studies Standards and in its Social Studies curriculum.

Mr. Blowman asked the CSAC members whether they had any questions regarding the school's submissions or any other outstanding questions or feedback for the school.

Mr. Taylor asked what kind of progress the school has made since the last CSAC meeting with respect to its plan for improvement, including its Claremont Plan. Ms. Allen stated that, aside from the Board action for retreat and training, the school is on target. With regards to the

school's benchmark assessments, which she stated that the school feels is key to zoning in on intervention, she indicated that the school is on target. She noted that the school is zoning in on students who are not receiving interventions, as well as those who are, to ensure that they are reaching higher benchmarks. She stated that the school provides enrichment classes outside of the regular classroom even for students who were meeting proficiency last year.

Mr. Taylor asked about the school's board training, which the school indicated was ongoing. Reverend Casson replied that the school is looking at early January. He stated that the Board held off on its last retreat pending the outcome of the renewal process so that the Board knows what direction it is moving into. Mr. Taylor asked who will provide the training and Reverend Casson replied that it was still "up for grabs," as the Board is currently looking for a facilitator.

Ms. Johnson asked how the school established its academic growth goals and what went into their development. Ms. Allen replied that the school looked at where it landed last year and, given all of the factors, particularly with Smarter Balanced being new, the school wanted to raise the bar, but the unknown was scary for the school. Ms. Banks stated that the school provided students with two assessments at the beginning of the year: Universal Screener and common assessments that the teachers had developed. She stated that the school looked not only at the questions that students had missed, but also how those questions had been determined and what standards had been missed. She stated that the school then determined which areas to focus on and how to go about looking at the student data through its Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in order to determine the learning progressions. She stated that, in addition, the school progress monitors all students in Response to Intervention (RtI) every two weeks, and teachers also give common assessments every nine weeks.

Ms. Johnson asked if, knowing that the school has brought in some interim assessments to help follow and track the projection of student performance, the school is also using the assessments for its Measure B assessments for teachers in the Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS). Ms. Banks replied that every teacher is using the Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI)/Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), as well as the common assessments, for their DPAS.

Ms. Johnson asked whether, looking at the new assessments that the school has brought forward, the Board or the school leadership considered incorporating mission-specific goals into its Performance Agreement. Ms. Allen explained that this is the school's second year using SRI/SMI, which has been helpful, and the school thought that bringing in common assessments would also help. However, the school decided against mission-specific goals for this year, but would consider it for next year as the board expands.

Ms. Johnson asked about the school's emphasis on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in its application, noting that AYP is not an accountability measure. She stated that she noted an over-emphasis on AYP, rather than a holistic framework. She asked the school to speak to this and the multiple measures incorporated into the framework. Ms. Allen stated that it wasn't intentional, but that the school was happy about making AYP. She stated that the school has not lost sight of the fact that it has work to do academically. She noted that last year was

tumultuous for the school and it needed a celebration, but the school has not lost sight of the fact that it has work to do.

Mr. Blowman asked the CSAC members whether there are any sections of the application that they feel warrants a Does Not Meet Standard rating at this time, based upon their review of the application, the supplemental materials, and the discussions as the CSAC meetings. Ms. Field Rogers, Ms. McCrae, Ms. Mazza, and Mr. Taylor stated that the Academic Framework does not meet standard. Mr. Alleyne abstained.

## Conclusion

Mr. Blowman summarized that the school meets standard on the Organizational and Financial Frameworks, but that the Academic Framework obviously does not. He stated that the CSAC is faced with wrestling with the consequences of that reality. He noted that it was clear that the school made growth this year, but noted that even with that growth, Reach just barely met the standard for “Does Not Meet Standard” over “Falls Far Below Standard.” He stated that the CSAC is faced with a four-year history of scores that are “down, up, down, up.” He noted that the role of the CSAC is not really to predict what will happen next year or at the end of this school year, but to base its decisions on performance to date. He acknowledged that the school is doing a tremendous amount of internal work to improve student outcomes and has high hopes for further student improvements this year. However, the Code requires that renewal decisions be based on performance to date, already demonstrated, and not future promises. Further, the Performance Framework sets clear standards for performance, and renewal decisions and recommendations must be driven by the assessment of performance against those standards. He stated that, for each of its four years of operations, the school has not only failed to meet standards, but has failed to meet standards by substantial amounts. He noted that, for two of the last four years, the school’s overall academic rating was “Falls Far Below Standard.” He noted that, while the CSAC recognizes the growth made over the last year, Delaware standards require more than doing better than the year before. He noted that, despite the growth made last year, the school’s level of growth and proficiency failed to meet the standards, and students are still not making sufficient annual growth to achieve proficiency within three years. He noted that, ultimately, what has to govern the CSAC's recommendation is what is currently before the CSAC - the school's demonstrated performance in relation to the established standards.

The motion was made to recommend non-renewal and was carried by a majority vote with Mr. Alleyne, who had not been present at the Initial CSAC Meeting, abstaining.

Mr. Blowman reminded the applicant that the CSAC’s recommendation is just that; a recommendation to the Secretary of Education on the renewal application.

**Next Steps:**

- A second public hearing will be held on December 10, 2014, in the 2nd floor Auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building, located at 820 North French Street, Wilmington DE, beginning at 6:00 p.m.
- The public comment period also ends on December 10, 2014.
- The State Board of Education will hold a meeting on December 18, 2014 in the 2nd floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building, located at 401 Federal Street, Dover DE, at which time the Secretary will announce his decision on the renewal application and, if required, the State Board will act on that decision.