

Delaware Department of Education

2012-13

STATE CHARTER SCHOOL REPORT

Published February 1, 2014

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I. LEGAL & POLICY ENVIRONMENT

A. What is the current state of Delaware's charter school policy landscape?

Recent changes to Delaware's charter school law, regulations, and policies have created a strong foundation for high quality charter school authorizing and, consequently, high levels of charter school performance and compliance. On June 26, 2013, Governor Jack Markell signed into law H.B. 165, which introduced a number of critical reforms intended to improve the quality of charter schools with increased accountability and support. These reforms included provisions to ensure a rigorous charter school application process, clarify and force performance expectations, improve charter flexibility and support, and ensure orderly closures of low-performing charter schools.

B. What innovations does Delaware's charter school policy landscape empower our charter schools to implement?

Delaware law enables charters to operate free of many state and school district rules and regulations governing public education. The law also encourages the use of different and innovative or proven school environments and teaching and learning methods.

We are particularly encouraged by activities in which schools partner with others. East Side Charter School, Kuumba Academy, Prestige Academy and Thomas A. Edison Charter School joined forces to improve teacher performance and student achievement, implementing the new Teaching Excellence Framework. The Teaching Excellence Framework provides frequent lesson observation and feedback to all teachers throughout the year, gathers data from multiple sources to help teachers learn and grow, celebrates excellence through recognition and reward and collaborates with other schools to learn from the best practices in each school. Kuumba, in another example in keeping with the original intent of Delaware Charter Law, has joined in partnership with both the Red Clay and Brandywine School Districts to train teachers and math coaches in the implementation of Singapore Math Strategies. Kuumba coaches and staff have provided training for both teachers and parents of the Brandywine School District.

The table below identifies innovative practices in place at each of Delaware's charter schools, as reported by each charter school in their 2012-13 Annual Report, which was submitted to the Department of Education by December 1, 2013. The individual charter school innovation discussions may be found in their [Annual Reports](#).

Academy of Dover	Academy of Dover implemented a technology program for all students to place emphasis on computer skills and an Entrepreneurship Program where students create avatars that are presented with fiscal challenges.
Campus Community Charter School	Campus Community employed a Behavior Coach to assist with the climate and culture of the school. The purpose of this new position is to provide support to faculty in structuring classroom procedures to minimize behavioral interruptions to learning and train teachers in effective strategies to quickly and effectively deal with disruption. The Behavior Coach handles students when removal from the classroom is necessary and facilitates the student's accountability for misbehavior and the return to class. Student assemblies and a gathering have been held to encourage and support students taking

	responsibility for their choices and to celebrate growth and success in this area.
Charter School of Wilmington	The Junior Research program at The Charter School of Wilmington gives high school students with an interest in math and science an authentic, in-depth experience in scientific research. The actual process begins freshmen year with an Introduction to Science Research class that teaches basic research and laboratory skills. As sophomores, after spending time on background research, students propose a topic for investigation and create an experimental design for the investigation. During their junior year, once the proposal is polished and approved, students conduct the experiment with guidance from a mentor or science professional. Over a twelve month period, students are matched with mentors and in some cases, practicing science professionals, as they research and actively investigate a specific scientific topic. The project can give every student at the school the opportunity to experience long-term learning practices that build self-reliance and confidence.
Delaware Academy of Public Safety and Security	Students have shown growth and success particularly in DAPSS's unique career readiness areas. The 10th grade Law enforcement classes participated in a twelve session police academy provided by the New Castle County Police. The students learned everything from dog handling to SWAT team procedures. A very critical item about our school is that, every student and teacher is AED and CPR certified through the American Red Cross.
Delaware College Preparatory Academy	DCPA's educational design uses a two-teacher instructional model in grades Kindergarten through grade two.
Delaware Military Academy	The new Commandant began a cultural change by naming DMA the Seahawk Nation. He increased ownership within the cadet population. DMA received a grant which enabled the school to install a new lighted display on the front of the Naval Science Building.
East Side Charter School	The most influential program of innovation East Side implemented this school year is the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which was approved by the Department of Education as an alternative instructional evaluation tool to replace DPAS II. This was motivated by the belief that educator observations are an opportunity to provide valuable, frequent, evidenced- based feedback to help teachers learn and grow. East Side set out to transition their observation and feedback loop from an analysis of practice towards one that coaches teachers on how to improve. The shift from an evaluative to coaching model not only helps us improve the quality of our teachers, but also accomplish a more broad, and impactful goal – to dramatically improve staff investment in the culture of continuous growth to which we all aspire. By opening teachers' doors to the instructional leadership team on a frequent basis, the stigma of limited observations has been removed and investment in the idea of a veritable culture of improvement has been established.

Family Foundations Academy	<p>Family Foundations Academy Charter School is working to blaze the trail in innovation. Our common core aligned curriculum that has been implemented for two years now has virtual technology that benefits teachers and students.</p> <p>Some of our innovations include and are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ipads for virtual classrooms in the middle school and honors classes. Teachers can enhance and supplement their curriculum and the common core standards with interactive lessons for students. 2. Established Elementary and Junior Honor Societies that go out into the community and volunteer. 3. FFA is participating in a Harvard Study. The Best Foot Forward Program that provides technology to the teacher for it to be incorporated in their daily lessons. 4. The middle school focuses on academic programs; Math League, Science Olympiad, STEM activities in the classrooms, Student Council, and Business Professionals of America. 5. Lead America is a program that allows students to visit and stay at Ivy League colleges during the summer so that they are exposed to the college experience. 6. We were one of the first schools to have a "Data Team" that analyzes school wide data and makes decisions with teachers and administration to impact change.
Gateway Lab School	<p>GLS students have a great need for social skills and life skills. To meet that need the school is using the services of Project Crossroad and Supporting Kidds to host student discussion groups where kids will focus on different skills such as conflict resolution, empathy, listening, and specific life skills classes. The Gateway staff is receiving 30 hours of school wide professional development in Responsive Classroom®, the school's social skills curriculum.</p>
Kuumba Academy	<p>Since 2007, KACS has successfully implemented the research-based <i>Singapore Math</i> program, a replication of how students in Singapore learn math and is in full alignment with the Common Core State Standards. <i>Singapore Math</i> uses an approach that moves from representing mathematical concepts in concrete ways, into using a pictorial modeling, and finally using that foundation to represent abstract thinking. This provides a process for students to solve multi-step problems. While <i>Singapore Math</i> does have an emphasis on computational skills, it also encourages an active thinking process, communication of mathematical ideas, problem solving, and strategic thinking processes so that students are developing the foundation they need for more advanced mathematics. The program emphasizes mental math and the model drawing approach so that students are able to build connections between mathematical concepts. <i>Singapore Math</i> books, especially in the lower grades, focus on covering less material with greater depth. <i>Singapore Math</i> for middle school, called <i>Elementary Mathematics</i>, follows a more integrated approach, where concepts and examples from algebra and geometry are introduced progressively at each grade level, building on the foundation set in grades K-5 and preparing students for more</p>

	advanced math. The content framework for the K-8 Singapore Math program covers topics in increasingly advanced detail in successive grades, building KACS students' expertise with mathematics through the K-8 continuum.
Las Americas ASPIRA	Las Americas ASPIRA provides students dual language instruction through two separate programs. The Dual Language Immersion Program began in grades K-1st in Year 1 and grows each year as students advance to the next grade. This program provides students with daily alternating instruction in each language, so students learn the fundamentals of the language (i.e., English Language Arts and Spanish Language Arts) while also learning content in core subjects. All students will become bilingual, bi-literate and bicultural in the dual language immersion program, while gaining the academic, physical, social and emotional skills to succeed in school and in life. The students in the upper grades (2 nd - 5th in Year 1; 3rd_6th in Year 2) are in the Spanish as a Second Language Program and have Spanish class every day all year long, similar to other core subjects.
MOT Charter School	Parents Offering Support Services in Education (P.O.S.S.E.) - The P.O.S.S.E. was born from the idea that all involved in the school community is responsible for the academic achievement of all of our students. Parent volunteers join the POSSE and receive training in small group math and/or reading instruction. The parent then commits to working 1- 2 hours each week for the year with a small group of students. The parent works closely with the teacher to design activities directed to the specific skill being addressed and then provides written feedback to the teacher regarding the students' progress. Parents are encouraged to work with teachers in grade levels that they have already experienced as a parent.
The New Maurice J. Moyer Academy	The New Maurice J. Moyer Academy offers math, English, science, and history courses, directed by teachers using interactive whiteboards. To meet the needs of struggling learners, students can take remediation and credit recovery courses. Through the K12 curriculum/learning platform, students can take up to four years of a world language and choose from a variety of electives, including anthropology, Web design, Entrepreneurship, and Green Design & Technology. Unlike other programs, where a student must be in a particular "academic path", the K12 program provides students with more autonomy over charting their own academic course.
Newark Charter School	Newark Charter School was the first school in Delaware (2005) to implement the research-based Olweus Anti-Bullying Program. The program enhances school culture because everyone has a part to play. Everyone has a right to a safe school where students feel secure and treat each other with mutual respect and kindness. Years later, such anti-bullying programs would become mandatory in Delaware public schools.

Odyssey Charter School	<p>Odyssey Charter School is a multicultural school that emphasizes Greek Language and Culture as a gateway for students to become global citizens. Odyssey offers an innovative approach to education by providing its students with instruction in a second language, Greek. The Greek language provides an additional focus on the classic roots and fundamentals of English, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Starting in Kindergarten, students spend 45 minutes per day learning the Greek language including reading, writing and speaking Greek. Students also spend 45 minutes per day in "Greek Math" coursework, where core math concepts aligned to Common Core State Standards are taught in Greek.</p> <p>Additionally, the Greek Program at OCS includes an emphasis on the arts through the creation of the Greek Art Club (after school), Summer Immersion Program and Greek Music Program (during the holidays). Odyssey Charter School has also participated in a multi-cultural parade in Philadelphia each year.</p>
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Positive Outcomes Charter School	Positive Outcomes Charter School (POCS), was founded by a group of educators and physicians who recognized that students struggling with mental health issues were an underserved population in desperate need of a small school setting that was not tied to district rules or geographic boundaries. What brings families to the school is its attention to the individual needs of students. Small class sizes, assistive technology for all, a focus on collaboration and teamwork of all members of the school community, and a highly qualified staff with special education experience are the primary reasons that families choose Positive Outcomes.
Prestige Academy	PACS offers new and returning scholars additional academic support through a two-week, four hour intensive summer remediation program. The program is designed to prevent summer learning loss, and to accelerate new and academically at risk scholars' progress toward academic proficiency. The summer program introduces new scholars to the Prestige culture and rigorous college preparatory curriculum. Summer Academy provides remedial instruction for math, reading, science, and social studies in a small group setting (1:12). Concurrently, a summer program through Affinity Health provides scholars with social and emotional support through workshops, small group lessons, role plays, and educational field trips. PACS also has a Saturday Academy. This program occurs the first and third Saturdays of every month between October and December. Saturday Academy utilizes the co-teaching model, wherein two teachers provide direct instruction and differentiation to a group no larger than eight scholars. Scholars with disabilities are also provided with push-in and pull-out services matching their benchmarks and goals. Saturday Academy is a positive incentive for scholars as they can earn behavior points and prizes.
Providence Creek Academy	Strong community ties are built through annual Service Learning projects. All students participate throughout the year by adopting an organization or project to give back to their community. Examples include Habitat for Humanity, Relay for Life, Chimes of Delaware, and the Food Bank of Delaware. Two days a year are devoted to actual service hours given to these organizations.
Sussex Academy	The Portfolio program requires all students maintain a portfolio featuring artifacts and reflections about their learning during the school year. Near the end of the school year students must present those portfolios to their parents.
Thomas A. Edison Charter School	Thomas A. Edison Charter School was the 2011 State Academic Achievement Award winner and has implemented a number of rigorous and challenging programs including Franklin Covey's 7- Habits leadership training for all students, Pre-AP Math and English in our middle grades, University of Chicago's STEP (Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress) Reading Assessment, Achieve 3000 (a web-based differentiated instructional reading program for struggling and gifted learners), First Move Chess program in grades 2---3, Algebra in the early and middle grades, and our 100-Book

	Challenge Reading Program, school-wide. Our chess program is one of the top programs in the state and nation, as our students have won the Delaware State Chess Championship, The Baltimore Open, Maryland All-Girls Championship, and the UMBC Championship, and finished as runner-up at the National Chess Championship in San Diego, in 2012 and in 3 rd place at the Nationals in Nashville, in 2013.
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C. How are Delaware’s charter schools driving and implementing innovative practices in non-charter public schools across the state?

As referenced above, there have been limited examples of partnerships between charter and non-charter public schools, and we will monitor the progress and expansion of those partnerships over the next year. Additionally, we are excited to see the recommendations brought forth from the task force created by SB 147, which focuses on opportunities for charter and District collaboration.

D. How do per-student costs at charter schools compare to those of other public schools?

(Although 14 Del. § 514 requires this report to share information comparing the per student expenditures of charter schools, considering all sources of such expenditures, with those of other public schools, the DOE will not have the necessary data to make this calculate and make this comparison until mid-April, well after the February 1 publication deadline. The most recent available data is for the 2011-12 school year, and that information was shared in last year’s State Charter School Report. The DOE will share this information in an updated version of this report when it becomes available.)

II. ENROLLMENT & PERFORMANCE

A. Who attends charter schools in Delaware?

Out of the approximately 132,204 students enrolled in Delaware public schools as of the September 30, 2013 count, 11,078 or 9.15% were enrolled in charter schools. Please see the Enrollment Data file – Appendix B – for additional information about Delaware charter school enrollment trends.

B. How do Delaware charter schools perform against the Performance Framework standards?

In the 2012-13 school year, 11 out of 21 Delaware charter schools achieved overall academic framework ratings of either “Meets Standard” (7 schools) or “Exceeds Standard” (4 schools). This is a slight increase in the overall ratings at these levels from 2011-12 (4 “Exceeds Standard”, 6 “Meets Standard”) and 2010-11 (1 “Exceeds Standard”, 6 “Meets Standard”), but it is still not the level of achievement or growth toward achievement that we would like to see among our charter schools. Over the last year, almost all charter schools have signed a Performance Agreement pledging to bring their performance across each domain of the [Performance Framework](#) (Academic, Organizational, and Financial) to at least a “Meets Standard” rating by the time of their next renewal.

Please see the Performance Framework data file – Appendix C – for additional information about the performance of Delaware’s charter schools against the Performance Framework standards. [The DOE Charter School Office web site](#) contains links to the 2012-13 Academic and Financial Framework reports for each charter school, along with Guidance Documents that explain in detail how each measure was calculated.

III. VISION FOR THE FUTURE

A. What are our goals as an authorizer?

The DOE is committed to meeting the highest professional standards for charter school authorizers, with the ultimate goal of leveraging that work to ensure that all charter schools in Delaware are high-performing charter schools. To make that happen, we will need to hold all charter schools to the high standards we have articulated in the Performance Framework, and monitor charter school performance against those standards, and consistently hold charter schools accountable for the results our students deserve. It is critical that all of our work be conducted in a clear, transparent, skillful, efficient, and highly professional manner.

B. How does our performance as a charter school authorizer position us to attain our goals?

The [Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing](#), published by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), reflects best practices and high professional standards drawn from charter school authorizers of all types from across the country. According to NACSA, "These guidelines have been written into numerous state laws, have informed federal legislation, and have served as the basis for the evaluation of authorizer practices. When embraced by authorizers and policymakers, they help to create an environment in which authorizers can better do their jobs to foster, and grow great charter schools."

The DOE is committed to becoming a model charter school authorizer, and doing so by holding itself to the Principles & Standards articulated by NACSA. With this in mind, we are using the occasion of our State Charter School Report to reflect on our performance as an authorizer against their standards, identifying areas of strength and potential opportunities for further growth. The table below summarizes our conclusions:

Standard 1: Agency Commitment and Capacity

Areas of Strength

- Supports and advances the purposes of charter school law.
- Ensures that the authorizer's leadership, and staff understand and are committed to the three core principles of high-quality charter school authorizing.
- Enlists expertise and competent leadership for all areas essential to charter school oversight through staff, contractual relationships, and/or intra- or inter-agency collaborations.

Potential Opportunities for Further Growth

- Implement policies, processes, and practices that streamline and systematize its work toward stated goals.

Standard 2: Application Process and Decision Making

Areas of Strength

- Welcomes proposals from first-time charter applicants as well as existing school operators/replicators, while requiring appropriate information from each one.
- Implements a charter application process that is open, well publicized, and transparent, and is organized around clear, realistic timelines.
- Requires all applicants to present a clear and compelling mission, a quality educational program, a solid business plan, effective governance and management structures and systems, founding team members demonstrating diverse and necessary capabilities, and clear evidence of the applicant's capacity to execute its plan successfully.
- Establishes distinct requirements and criteria for applicants proposing to contract with education service or management providers.
- Rigorously evaluates each application through thorough review of the written proposal, a substantive in-person interview with the applicant group, and other due diligence to examine the applicant's experience and capacity, conducted by knowledgeable and competent evaluators.
- Grants charters only to applicants that have demonstrated competence and capacity to

Potential Opportunities for Further Growth

- Make application available before the application acceptance window opens, to provide prospective applicants with more time to complete and submit high-quality applications.
- Continue to improve the clarity and transparency of the application decision-making process.

succeed in all aspects of the school, consistent with the stated approval criteria.

Standard 3: Performance Contracting

Areas of Strength

- Allows—and requires contract amendments for—occasional material changes to a school’s plans, but does not require amending the contract for non-material modifications.
- Established the performance standards under which schools will be evaluated, using objective and verifiable measures of student achievement as the primary measure of school quality.
- Defined clear, measurable, and attainable academic, financial, and organizational performance standards and targets that the school must meet as a condition of renewal, including but not limited to, state and federal measures.

Potential Opportunities for Further Growth

- Complete development and implementation of charter contracts that clearly:
 - State the roles and responsibilities of the school and the authorizer;
 - State and respect the autonomies to which schools are entitled—based on statute, waiver, or authorizer policy—including those relating to the school’s authority over educational programming, staffing, budgeting, and scheduling

Standard 4: Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation

Areas of Strength

- Requires and reviews annual financial audits of schools, conducted by a qualified independent auditor.
- Provides clear technical guidance to schools as needed to ensure timely compliance with applicable rules and regulations.
- Provides an annual written report to each school, summarizing its performance and compliance to date and identifying areas of strength and areas needing improvement.
- Respects the school’s authority over its day-to-day operations.
- Refrains from directing or participating in educational decisions or choices that are appropriately within a school’s purview under the charter law or contract.

Potential Opportunities for Further Growth

- Complete implementation of the Organizational Framework by providing clear guidelines around how ratings will be developed and how compliance data will be evaluated throughout the charter term.

Standard 5: Revocation and Renewal Decision-Making

Areas of Strength

- Bases the renewal process and renewal decisions on thorough analyses of a comprehensive body of objective evidence defined by the performance framework in the charter contract.
- Grants renewal only to schools that have achieved the standards and targets stated in the charter contract, are organizationally and fiscally viable, and have been faithful to the terms of the contract and applicable law.
- Provides to each school, in advance of the renewal decision, a cumulative performance report that:
 - Summarizes the school's performance record over the charter term, and
 - States the authorizer's summative findings concerning the school's performance and its prospects for renewal.

Potential Opportunities for Further Growth

- Further strengthen protocols for pre-renewal meetings with charter schools

C. What future policy goals are we exploring to enable us to excel in our charter school authorizing work and drive high performance across Delaware's charter school sector?

The following identifies some of our future policy goals:

- A longer time period to execute a high-quality renewal process.
- An expedited new charter school application process for highly successful charter school operators.
- Alignment of new charter school application criteria to identified geographic and programmatic needs in the state.