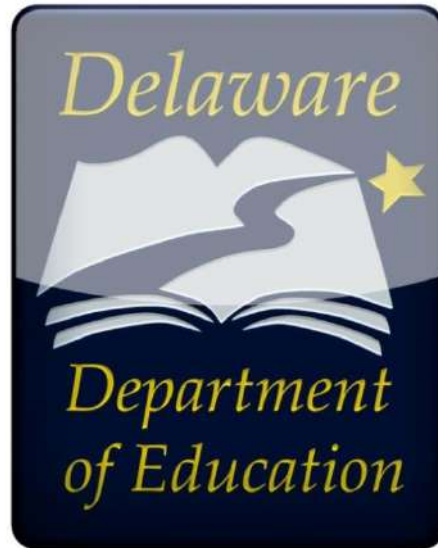


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Delaware Academy of Public Safety and Security

MAJOR MODIFICATION APPLICATION INITIAL REPORT

CSAC Initial Meeting: January 26, 2016
CSAC Initial Report Published: January 29, 2016

On December 10, 2015, Delaware Academy of Public Safety and Security submitted an application for a major modification of its charter.

The following were in attendance at the Initial Meeting of the CSAC on January 26, 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

Non-voting Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

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

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
- Michelle Whalen, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Barbara Clendaniel, Acting Executive Assistant, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE

Representatives of Delaware Academy of Public Safety and Security

- Charles Copeland, Chairman of the Board
- Sandra Wilson-Hypes, Commissioner
- Herb Sheldon, Chief Financial Officer
- Brent Waninger, Chief of Cadets
- Karen Patterson, Chief of Academics
- Ronald Patterson, Director of Cadet Services

Additional Attendees

- Casey Guerke, Innovative Schools

Discussion

The following was discussed:

- A summary of the request – Through its major modification application, the school seeks to reduce its authorized enrollment target by 22% from 480 to 375 students over five years, beginning with a 2016-17 target of 330 students. This year’s enrollment currently stands at 303 and the school is having its strongest financial year. The modification request is doable from a financial and staffing standpoint, and is a cultural “must.” The school has initiated a strategic plan and has changed its policies and procedures. Finally, the school has reviewed data and has determined that the requested enrollment is a more practical reality based upon the school’s location.
- The extent to which the change in enrollment would impact the school’s percentage of special education students and, in turn, staffing levels – The school responded that it currently has approximately 57 cadets with Individualized Education Programs (IEP’s). Those cadets are served by four Paraprofessionals and two special education teachers, including Mr. Patterson. The Paraprofessionals work in the classroom under the supervision of the certified special education teachers. However, in the event that the school’s special education population is reduced, the school intends to reduce its special education staffing levels accordingly.
- Whether the school can adequately serve all of its students, including its special education students, on its reduced staffing of eight teachers after a reduction from the previous school year – The school responded that its current staffing level is now in line with the state’s recommended number of units and not overinflated from a budgetary standpoint. The current student-teacher ratio remains at 22:1.
- The reasoning behind and impact of the organizational changes –The school responded that the reasoning behind the organizational change was the realization that the school needed to make both cultural and academic changes, yet the organizational structure was disjointed. Now, the Chief of Cadets oversees school culture whereas the Chief of Academics oversees academics.
- How the school is addressing culture, as the school has seen anywhere from a 22 to a 43 drop in student population from year to year – The school responded that its cultural issues became evident around mid-December last year due, at least in part, from bringing students in mid-year. While some students came to DAPSS for its first responder environment, they found a high school with a first responder component bolted on but not integrated into the overall culture of the school. Other students came to DAPSS for other reasons and did not like the first responder component. The bifurcation was also evident among staff. This realization precipitated discussions about finding the proper balance in the number of students both from a physical and cultural perspective, as the intent was for the school to be a true public safety academy. To that end, the board also added four public safety professionals to its membership. While students do not necessarily have to want to enter a public safety career field, they still need to buy into the culture. The school knew that it would leave students who did not buy in, but it has since seen a definite cultural change within the school. Additionally, from a recruitment

perspective, the school was well under target last year, but is right on target so far this year. Now that the academy has an identity, its cultural issues are improving.

- How the school is working with staff regarding implementation of culture changes – The school has acknowledged that this has been a challenge, as there are still staff members who were present under the prior cultural issues. However, the staff is dedicated and, like students, had to decide whether to buy in. Staff members have bought in and actually approached the board asking for the cultural shift. The school acknowledged that, last year, the school engaged in serious discussions about what student population was necessary to continue the school's operation. The school decided that it would close prior to the start of the school year if it could not retain 300 students, as it would not have enough resources to be successful. The school then identified most of the teachers and staff that it was looking to keep and shared this message, including the school's expectations for teachers with respect to the cultural shift. As a result, the school experienced buy in from the teachers that stayed on. The school is still working on its cultural issues, but the expectations have been set and the school has seen improvement.
- The school's current numbers and anticipated retention – The school responded that it anticipates an 8-10% loss. However, the school sets monthly targets to make sure that it can backfill those numbers. The school hit its target in November and December, and has recruited 47 of its targeted 60 students for January. The majority are 9th graders, but the numbers are across all grades. Ms. Nagourney noted that the numbers from the Data Service Center confirm that there are 34 for 9th grade, 5 for 10th grade, and 8 for 11th grade. The school noted that it has not allowed students to enroll at the school after September 30th, as it believed that the mid-year enrollments negatively impacted the school culture.
- 9th grade enrollment at this time last year – The school responded that it had approximately 15 9th graders enrolled. The goal is for the school to be at capacity at the end of the open enrollment period, but it would recruit up until September 30th if necessary until the goal is reached.
- Strategies that the school has put in place to increase its enrollment – The school has invested in advertising and name branding, as well as targeting potential students who may already be public-safety minded by:
 - advertising at the mall;
 - holding open houses;
 - giving away branded items;
 - advertising on billboards;
 - creating a video for YouTube and Facebook;
 - participating in community events such as 5K's; and
 - recruiting at open houses held by other public safety agencies.
- The CSAC acknowledged the changes that the school made since August of last year took a lot of courage and resolve, noting that the cultural message is a good message to send to students and staff.
- Academic performance – The CSAC noted that academic performance was a topic of discussion during the renewal process, resulting in a condition placed upon the school's

renewal. The CSAC expressed concern regarding what was reflected in the school's STAR data versus its state assessment data, noting that this raises concern regarding alignment to state standards. The CSAC inquired as to whether the data has led to any discussions about alignment to state standards. The CSAC inquired about what the school did with its curriculum as a result of the renewal discussion and how state standards have been embedded across content areas, noting that the school identified revision of curriculum maps as an issue for this summer. The school responded that culture was its primary focus, as it believes culture drives academics. The school acknowledged that its test scores were deplorable. However, the school identified the following steps that it has taken and plans to take:

- Recognizing that the state doesn't have a growth measure, the school implemented STAR testing, and later Read180, to help identify students needing urgent intervention;
 - For students in need of urgent intervention for math, the school has implemented a "Math Foundation" and is starting to look at pull-out Response to Intervention (RtI);
 - Recognizing that many of its teachers are young and lack experience, the school has brought in an experienced educator to serve as a mentor;
 - Next summer, the school will look into implementing integrated math rather than the current tiered approach;
 - Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) are being implemented for the first time both by subject and grade level;
 - The school has brought on a Developmental Coach to work with teachers on evaluations and serve as a mentor;
 - The school is ensuring that its science programs are following Next Generation Science Standards and obtaining whatever resources they need to be successful;
 - All lesson plans are submitted at the beginning of each week to make sure that they meet state standards in each area and differentiated instruction, and teachers are evaluated to ensure that they are implementing what's in the lesson plans;
 - The school is becoming much more project driven; and
 - The school is doing an instructional analysis on each subject area to identify problem areas before revising its curriculum maps.
- The CSAC inquired specifically about the testing data, noting that 60% of students in STAR math are hitting the national benchmark, whereas only 7% hit the benchmark on the state assessment in math and 19.7% in reading. However, the prior year, those same students demonstrated 62% proficiency in math and 64.9% in reading on the DCAS. The school responded that some things that had been going on under the prior leadership were brought to light after testing. For example, at least one student reported that a teacher told the student that the test did not matter. While it was the same students, the scores were dramatically different because they did not approach the test the same way.
 - The CSAC noted that, while this year in many ways represents a transition year in terms of flexibility in accountability, it cannot ignore that there was a renewal condition around academics that must be taken seriously. The school boasted that, last year, it had its first

graduating class, which received over \$1.5 million in scholarships and 80% of whom were accepted into their first college choice. The school acknowledged that it has to evaluate the disconnect between test scores and achievement.

- The CSAC referred the school to resources, including to the Common Ground Program and LearnZillion trainings, to assist with curriculum as well as teaching and instruction strategies. The school stated that it is looking into adding a curriculum specialist for next year if it is within the budget.
- What the school is doing to prepare students for assessments – The school responded that it has an incentive program for students, including movie and amusement park tickets for students who meet their benchmarks. Additionally, teachers speak individually with each of the cadets to show them their scores and discuss where they should be for the next test. Additionally, one of the benefits of Renaissance Learning is that it offers the ability to run reports on individual students and classes and then offers resources based upon identified needs.
- The CSAC referred the school to Regulation 925 for guidance on proper implementation of Rtl, including progress monitoring.
- The CSAC acknowledged the transition for 11th graders to the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) as their assessment and reminded the school of the available free resources, including the Khan Academy. The school noted that its 11th graders just completed an SAT prep class.
- The CSAC cautioned that, because the school has 120 students from the Christina School District, it receives its local funds based on what the school spent this year. However, in light of Christina’s budgetary issues, the school should anticipate that its local funds from Christina will go down significantly. The school may end up getting more students, but less dollars, placing the school at closer to an 80% budget even if it achieves its enrollment target. Christina is currently spending approximately 20% less, though it is unclear whether that will continue throughout the year.
- Whether the school has a process in place for ensuring that the needs-based funding categories for students with disabilities are accurate – The school responded that it looks at IEP’s once the cadet is enrolled. Then, the school meets with each student’s parents about the IEP and go over services and expectations. After that meeting, the school sets up the actual IEP meeting. The CSAC reminded the school that the IEP meeting would occur after the September 30th count, once the school gets to know the students. The CSAC also cautioned that hiring Paraprofessionals is good, but does not substitute for the hiring of highly-qualified certified teachers of students with disabilities.
- The CSAC noted that the application appears to demonstrate a return to the original mission and asked how the school plans to ensure that it does not fall off course again in the future. – The school responded that it largely boils down to school leadership, having first responder representation on the board, and bringing in quality teachers who ideally have a first responder background. Now that the school has found its permanent home, it can shift its focus from things like growing to running the school appropriately. Additionally, changes have been updated in written policies that have been adopted by the board and would continue even if the school experienced a change in command.

Conclusion:

Mr. Blowman asked the CSAC whether there were outstanding areas of concern or whether additional information was needed to inform its decision-making. No areas of concern were stated and no additional information was requested.

Next Steps:

- An Initial CSAC Report will be issued no later than January 29, 2016.
- The first of two public hearings will take place on February 1, 2016, in the 2nd Floor Auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building, which is located at 820 N. French St., Wilmington, Delaware, beginning at 5:00 p.m.
- The school's response to the Initial CSAC Report, if the school chooses to submit a response, is due by the close of business on February 16, 2016.
- A Final CSAC Meeting will be held on February 22, 2016, in the 2nd Floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building, which is located at 401 Federal St., Dover, Delaware.
- A Final CSAC Report will be issued no later than March 1, 2016.
- A second and final public hearing will take place on March 7, 2016, in the 2nd Floor Auditorium of 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 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.