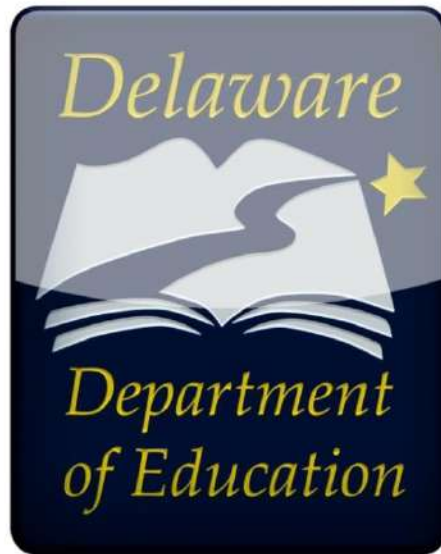


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Early College High School at Delaware State University

RENEWAL APPLICATION FINAL REPORT

CSAC Final Meeting: November 28, 2017
CSAC Final Report Published: December 1, 2017

By September 30, 2017, Early College High School at Delaware State University (ECHS) submitted an application to renew its charter. Consideration of this application is in accordance with the applicable provisions of 14 *Del. C. Ch. 5*, including § 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 28, 2017:

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
- Amy Baker-Sheridan, Education Associate, Academic Supports
- Mary Ann Mieczkowski, Director, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Seher Ahmad, Data Fellow, Performance Supports

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Delaware Department of Justice, Counsel to the Committee
- Denise Stouffer, Lead Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE
- Sheila Lawrence, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office, DDOE

Ex-Officio Members (Non-voting)

- Donna Johnson, Executive Director, Delaware State Board of Education

Representatives of Charter School

- Dr. Marshá T. Horton, Board President
- Denese Lindsey, Board Treasurer
- Dr. Evelyn Edney, Principal
- Nyia McCants, Assistant Principal
- Timothy Yancy, Operations Manager
- Dorcell Spence, Financial Consultant

Discussion

Mr. Blowman stated that an initial public hearing was held on October 10, 2017 and the CSAC Initial Meeting was held on October 25, 2017. He added that the CSAC Initial Report was issued on October 31, 2016. The school submitted a response to the CSAC Initial Report on November 14, 2017.

Mr. Blowman stated that the purpose of the CSAC Final Meeting was for the CSAC to continue its review of the Renewal Application, probe any areas of concern through a discussion with the applicant, and to issue a recommendation on the renewal application to the Secretary of Education.

Mr. Blowman stated that the CSAC identified the following areas of concern at the CSAC Initial Meeting and requested a response from the school:

1. Curriculum (Math)
 - a. Provide documentation of how Delaware statistics standards are addressed within the ECHS core mathematics curriculum.
 - b. Provide documentation of the pathway students take that ensures they complete all high school mathematics course requirements when they begin high school with pre-algebra.
2. Memorandum of Understanding with Delaware State University
 - a. The school was asked to provide a copy of the revised MOU with Delaware State University.

Mr. Blowman asked the CSAC if there were any questions or concerns regarding the school's response to the CSAC Initial Report.

Ms. Baker-Sheridan asked the school to confirm that entering freshmen who are below grade level in mathematics are required to take pre-algebra and would get on track to take grade level courses in the second semester by doubling up on their courses and, ultimately, be on track to take college-level courses by their senior year. Dr. Edney agreed. Ms. Baker-Sheridan asked the school to confirm that all students would have access to the statistics standards by the fall of their junior year even if they are on the pre-algebra pathway. Dr. Edney agreed.

Ms. Johnson noted that the submitted mathematics pathway appears to list statistics and pre-calculus as two separate courses and asked the school to confirm that there is a separate statistics curriculum. Dr. Edney stated that students who are on the college track may take statistics at the university and other students will take pre-calculus with some statistics. Ms. Johnson asked the school to describe how students are prepared for the 11th grade SAT assessment. Dr. Edney stated the students begin to receive SAT preparation in their sophomore year and begin working with Khan Academy by their junior year.

Mr. Blowman noted that there was some discussion at the CSAC Initial Meeting regarding the school's memorandum of understanding with Delaware State University (DSU) and the benefits and potential risks of having shared board members. He asked the school to describe how its policies

and procedures help to mitigate any potential risks and/or conflicts of interest. Dr. Horton stated that the MOU outlines the roles and responsibilities of Early College High School and the university. She also stated that the early college high school model is unique, explaining that out of the 300 early college high schools across the nation only 3 of them are charter schools. She added that the ECHS Board will seek an opinion from the Public Integrity Commission to determine if there are any potential risks and/or conflicts of interest with having Board members who are DSU employees and/or are members of the DSU Board of Trustees. Currently, she added, ECHS Board members for whom this applies do not comprise a majority of the ECHS Board. Ms. Hickey asked the school to confirm whether the PIC review and opinion will include the finances and fiduciary responsibilities of individuals which may pose a conflict with the school. Dr. Horton agreed.

Ms. Field Rogers requested that the school submit a copy of the PIC opinion to the Charter School Office. Ms. Stouffer asked that the school submit its request to PIC within 60 working days and the school agreed. Mr. Blowman confirmed with the school that if anything in the PIC opinion requires any changes to the school's bylaws, policies and procedures, the school would make the necessary changes and provide copies of the Board approved documents to the Charter School Office.

Conclusion

Mr. Blowman asked voting members of CSAC whether there was any additional information that it required to inform its decision-making.

Mr. Blowman recommended renewal of the charter for a five year term beginning July 1, 2018 which would include approval of the major modification to remove its charter management organization, Innovative Schools.

The motion was made and seconded to approve the recommendation for the renewal of Early College High School at Delaware State University, which would include approval of the requested major modification to remove its charter management organization, and this motion was carried unanimously. Mr. Blowman reminded the school that the CSAC's recommendation was just that: a recommendation to the Secretary of Education on the renewal application.

Next Steps:

- On or before December 5, 2017, the CSAC will issue a Final Report which will include its recommendation on the Renewal Application.
- A second public hearing will be held on December 5, 2017, at the J.W. Collette Building, Conference Rooms A&B, 35 Commerce Way, Dover.
- The public comment period ends on December 8, 2017.
- The Secretary of Education will announce her decision at the December 14, 2017 State Board of Education meeting.