

Section V

2004 Accountability Committee Report and Recommendations

Criterion 1.

The individuals and entities submitting the application are qualified to operate a charter school and implement the proposed educational program and the proposed board of directors includes representation from teachers and parents of students at the school and that certified teachers and community members were involved in the development of the proposed charter.

Committee Summary:

The Board of Directors for the Charter School of Wilmington (CSW) consists of 13 members. Most of the Board members are high-ranking officials in large corporations located in Delaware who have considerable experience in management and leadership roles. There is one parent representative, one faculty representative and one community representative included on the current board. One member of the Board is an Associate Professor in Education at the University of Delaware and one member is legal counsel for a major corporation.

The amended and restated bylaws of the Charter School of Wilmington include provisions for selecting new members to the board in the event of resignations, removals or vacancies. The bylaws also include the duration, role and responsibilities of the board members.

The Charter School of Wilmington has met the standard of Criterion 1.

Criterion 2.

The chosen form of organization, identified in the articles of incorporation and the bylaws, or the membership agreement, conforms to the Delaware General Corporation Law.

Committee Summary:

A valid Certificate of Incorporation is on file with the Secretary of State, Division of Incorporations. The Charter School of Wilmington has submitted amended bylaws dated 12/4/01 as contained in this document.

The Charter School of Wilmington has met the standard of Criterion 2.

Criterion 3.

The mission statement, goals, and educational objectives are consistent with the description of legislative intent set forth in Sec. 501 of this title and the restrictions on charter school operations set forth in Sec. 506 in this title.

Committee Summary:

The goal of the Charter School of Wilmington is clearly outlined in the original charter application. As stated, "it is to enhance the quality of public education in Delaware by developing a unique model school that utilizes the most effective educational techniques and ensures equal educational opportunity, thus meeting the needs of students, the business community, and society." To date, the Charter School of Wilmington is the only public high school specifically dedicated to the study of math and science in the State of Delaware. Student achievement has been satisfactorily demonstrated on state assessments and in nationally recognized measures of student accomplishment in math and science.

The Charter School of Wilmington currently employs forty-four teachers. Thirty-eight of the teachers hold Standard or Professional Certificates, three teachers hold limited Standard Certificates and three [according to Department of Education records] are not certified. The Charter School is in compliance with State regulations regarding teacher certification at this time.

The Charter School of Wilmington has met the standard of Criterion 3.

Criterion 4.

The school has set goals for student performance and will utilize satisfactory indicators to determine whether its students meet or exceed such goals and the academic standards set by the State. The indicators shall include the assessments required for all students in other public schools, although the charter school may adopt additional standards or assessment requirements, and shall include timelines for the achievement of students' performance goals and the assessment of such performance.

Committee Summary:

Satisfactory indicators, including the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP), are used to determine whether Charter School of Wilmington students meet or exceed the institutional goals and the academic standards set forth in the school's charter and required by the State of Delaware. The Annual Report for 2002-03 indicates that the school's tenth grade students have had the highest scores on every Delaware Assessment Test since 1999, the year when the test was first administered. The same report also identifies other indicators that either formally or informally assess the success of students. These include: (a) parent/teacher satisfaction surveys; (b) teacher and student awards, (many of which are first place); (c) student attendance and dropout rate; and, (d) enrollment applications.

The Charter School of Wilmington has met the standard of Criterion 4.

Criterion 5.

The school proposes a satisfactory plan for evaluating student performance and procedures for taking corrective action in the event that student performance at the charter school falls below such standards that are reasonably likely to succeed.

Committee Summary:

Student performance is assessed using a variety of measures that consider differences in learning styles and learning history. The evaluation process utilizes written, oral and demonstration formats. Classroom observation, formal tests, evaluation of homework, notebooks, and journals, projects, group activity and studio portfolios are all valid measures of learner progress and achievement. In addition, standardized tests, such as the CTBS, the California Achievement Test, and the SAT Achievement Tests are given to facilitate correct placement and to identify areas for both further enrichment and remediation.

For students who are academically at-risk, a corrective action plan is in place. Any entering student may, or can be, required to attend a summer program to address deficiencies likely to hamper his/her success in the freshman year. During the regular school year, a student whose performance falls below acceptable levels receives tutoring assistance by peers, teachers, and/or business mentors. Such tutoring takes place as part of an extended day program. For those whose yearly cumulative performance is below acceptable standards, an appropriate summer program is provided.

The Charter School of Wilmington has met the standard of Criterion 5

Criterion 6.

The school's educational program, including curriculum and strategies, has the potential to improve student performance and must be aligned to meet the Delaware Content Standards and state program requirements, and in the case of a charter high school, state graduation requirements. High school programs must provide driver education. A previously approved charter school may continue to operate in compliance with the terms of its current approval, but its charter shall not be renewed unless the school shall submit an application for renewal in full compliance with the requirements of this subsection.

Committee Summary:

The Charter School of Wilmington affords its students the opportunity to enroll in a maximum of 28 credits over a period of 4 years. A minimum of 24.5 credits is required for graduation, compared to the state mandated 22 or the Red Clay Consolidated School District requirement of 24. Primary differences are in math (4) and science (4.5) as well as a senior research project (.5). As stipulated, driver education is integrated into the curriculum for all tenth grade students.

Course offerings across the curriculum are aligned to both national and state standards. The number and variety of math/science elective offerings far exceed those typically found in the comprehensive high school. All courses within the core curriculum

are offered at 3 different levels/phases, i.e., college prep, average ability; college prep, above average ability; and, college prep, very high ability. The latter allows a student's program to be custom tailored, thereby encouraging maximum growth and academic achievement.

The Charter School of Wilmington has met the standard for Criterion 6.

Criterion 7.

The schools educational program sets forth strategies to be employed, as it deems necessary, to accommodate the needs of at-risk students and those needing special education services.

Committee Summary:

No special education students are currently enrolled. However, 24 students do have 504 accommodation plans. The accommodations include extended time for assignments and tests as well as sitting in the front of the room, teachers wearing a FM transmitter and/or signing assignment books.

Committee Recommendation:

The committee was concerned that the school has never had a special education student enrolled. Although the focus of the school is a rigorous academic environment, students with disabilities are often capable of satisfactory performance in such settings with appropriate accommodations. The committee recommends that the Charter School of Wilmington demonstrate an increased effort to inform prospective applicants that the school is open to students with disabilities and that their disability will not be a factor in determining their admission to the school.

The Charter School of Wilmington has met the standard for Criterion 7.

Criterion 8.

Legislative Criterion: "The plan for the school is economically viable, based on a review of the school's proposed budget of projected revenues and expenditures for the first three years, the plan for starting the school, and the major contracts planned for equipment and services, leases, improvements, purchases of real property and insurance."

Committee Summary:

Since the initial charter was granted, the Charter School of Wilmington has demonstrated economic viability. It has met all financial obligations, including salaries and benefits, purchased services, supplies and materials, and capital outlay. The Charter School has met its cost-sharing obligations to the District for facilities use. It has been able to attract substantial contributions from partners and other outside sources. There is an understanding by the CSW of the funding generated through the September 30th unit count and the need to live within those limitations. Since enrollment is the basis of the unit count, their projections of enrollment contained within their original application have been exceeded.

Through an investigation of its current budget and proposed expenditures against previous actual revenue and expenditures, the CSW appears to be realistic in its projections of income and expenditures. Based on the school's current financial projections and information submitted to Red Clay, the Charter School of Wilmington will continue satisfactory financial operations.

The Charter School of Wilmington has met the standards of Criterion 8.

Criterion 9.

The school's financial and administrative operations meet or exceed the same standards, procedures and requirements as a school district.

The Charter School of Wilmington operates within the Delaware Financial Management System, which is the accounting system of all agencies, including school districts, of the state of Delaware. Although there have been audit findings related to student accounting and enrollment, audits performed by the Office of Auditor of Accounts have not disclosed any material weaknesses in the financial affairs of the school. The auditors define a material weakness as "a condition in which the design or operation of one or more of the internal control components does not reduce to a relatively low level the risk that misstatements in amounts that would be material in relation to the financial statements being audited may occur and not be detected within a timely period by employees in the normal course of performing their assigned functions."

A part-time business manager has been hired which should facilitate continued good financial operations. Based on the school's current financial projections and

information submitted to Red Clay, the Charter School of Wilmington will continue satisfactory financial operations.

Committee Recommendation:

The Auditor of Accounts has indicated through an audit finding that an agreement between the Red Clay Consolidated School District and the Charter School of Wilmington should be established for the use of facilities by the Charter School and the funding of shared costs. The Red Clay Consolidated School District and the Charter school of Wilmington have agreed to establish a written agreement on the use of facilities and shared costs as a result of this review. Counsel is now drafting the agreement.

Pending the implementation of the recommendation, The Charter School of Wilmington will meet the standards of Criterion 9.

Criterion 10.

The assessment of the school's potential legal liability and the types of limits of insurance coverage the school plans to obtain are adequate.

The Charter School of Wilmington has general liability, hired/non-owned automobile liability, umbrella liability, and worker's compensation employer's liability insurance. The general liability aggregate is \$2 million with an additional \$5 million umbrella. The insurer is the Selective Insurance Company, which insures most districts in the state of Delaware, including Red Clay Consolidated. Athletic programs solely provided by the Charter School have student athlete insurance coverage provided by them.

In addition, as a public school of the state of Delaware, coverage for worker's compensation, unemployment compensation and automobile self-insurance coverage are provided. Since the Charter School operates within a building owned and operated by the Red Clay Consolidated School District, it is recommended that the District be named as an "additional insured" under the Charter School of Wilmington's liability policies. Real property is covered under the state of Delaware self-insurance program.

It appears that insurance coverage is adequate.

The Charter School of Wilmington has met the standards of Criterion 10.

Criterion 11.

The procedures the school plans to follow to discipline students and ensure its students adherence to school attendance requirements comply with state and federal law.

Committee Summary:

The student handbook/agenda contains a detailed explanation of student rules, regulations and responsibilities. The handbook addresses a wide variety of topics commonly associated with a high school environment. The guidelines regarding student attendance and the code of conduct are reasonable and appropriate for high school students.

Discipline data provided by the Charter School of Wilmington shows a significantly lower suspension rate when compared to statewide data over the last five years. In the breakdown of infractions for the 2002-2003 school year, there were several incidents listed that require a HB 85 report to the Department of Education. However, the school reported zero HB 85 incidents.

Committee Recommendation:

The Charter School of Wilmington should review and/or revise its procedure for ensuring the timely and accurate reporting of discipline incidents to the Department of Education. A written report explaining the procedure should be submitted to the Accountability Committee by July 1, 2004.

Pending the implementation of the recommendation, The Charter School of Wilmington will meet the standards of Criterion 11.

Criterion 12.

The procedures the school plans to follow to assure the health and safety of the students, employees and guests of the school while they are on school property are adequate and that the charter school will comply with the applicable provisions of local, state and federal law, including the provisions of Chapter 85 of Title 11.

Committee Summary:

The Charter School of Wilmington employs a full time, qualified nurse to assist students with routine illnesses and injuries, monitor and dispense medications according to prescriptions, and to render aid in emergency situations. The nurse is aware of, and adheres to, federal guidelines regarding the confidentiality of medical information of students. The nurse keeps accurate records and enforces State regulations pertaining to immunizations.

The school has established procedures for visitations. Guest speakers, visitors, or prospective students spending the day at the school are all required to register with the main office and are issued visitor passes. In addition, most visitors are assigned a guide to assist them with their visit or tour of the school.

The Charter School of Wilmington has met the standards of Criterion 12.

Criterion 13.

The school shall have a satisfactory plan for the timely transferring of student data and records to the Department of Education.

Committee Summary:

The committee's review of two audit reports conducted by the State of Delaware, Office of Auditor Accounts, dated May 20, 2003 and June 17, 2003 contained the following findings pertinent to this review:

1. The Charter School of Wilmington did not have accurate written policies and procedures for the preparation of the September 30th Unit Count.
2. The Charter School of Wilmington did not have operating procedures to ensure that affected school districts were notified by March 1st with the names and residency information of students from their districts enrolling in the school the following September.
3. The Charter School of Wilmington had more applications than seats available and did not hold a lottery to select students.

The accountability committee met with representatives of the Charter School of Wilmington to discuss the admission procedure. In the case of over-subscription, students will be selected by lottery in the following manner: students with an interest in the school's teaching methods, philosophy or educational focus, Red Clay students, siblings of enrolled students, children of the school's founder (up to 5% of the school's population), and then all remaining students to enrollment capacity. The Charter School of Wilmington developed a process to determine interest and will review this process and results yearly with the district.

Committee Recommendations:

The Charter School of Wilmington should develop written procedures for conducting the September 30th count and written procedures for notifying school districts of their students enrolled on or before any applicable deadline in charter school law. These written procedures shall be submitted to the accountability committee by July 1, 2004.

The Charter School of Wilmington should provide the accountability committee with summary admissions data in the spring of each year. The accountability committee

will meet with representatives of the school to analyze admissions data and student performance data.

Pending implementation of the recommendations, the Charter School of Wilmington will meet the standards for Criterion 13.

Criterion 14.

The school's board of directors shall annually certify to the Department, on a form to be provided by the Department, that prior to the payment of any fees or other sums to any management company employed by the board, the board will insure that sufficient revenues of the school are devoted to adequately support the school's proposed educational program.

This Criterion is not applicable since no management company is involved.

Summary of Recommendations

1. The committee was concerned that the school has never had a special education student enrolled. Although the focus of the school is a rigorous academic environment, students with disabilities are often capable of satisfactory performance in such a setting with appropriate accommodations. The committee recommends that the Charter School of Wilmington demonstrate an increased effort to inform prospective applicants that the school is open to students with disabilities and that their disability will not be a factor in determining their admission to the school.
2. The Auditor of Accounts has indicated through an audit finding that an agreement between the Red Clay Consolidated School District and the Charter School of Wilmington should be established for the use of facilities by the Charter School and the funding of shared costs. The Red Clay Consolidated School District and the Charter school of Wilmington have agreed to establish a written agreement on the use of facilities and shared costs as a result of this review. Counsel is now drafting the agreement.
3. The Charter School of Wilmington should review and/or revise its procedure for ensuring the timely and accurate reporting of discipline incidents to the Department of Education. A written report explaining the procedure should be submitted to the Accountability Committee by July 1, 2004.
4. The Charter School of Wilmington should develop written procedures for conducting the September 30th count and for notifying school districts of their students enrolled on or before any applicable deadline in charter school law. These written procedures shall be submitted to the accountability committee by July 1, 2004.
5. The Charter School of Wilmington should provide the accountability committee with summary admissions data in the spring of each year. The accountability committee will meet with representatives of the school to analyze admissions data and student performance data.

THE

CHARTER SCHOOL

O F W I L M I N G T O N

April 21, 2004

Mark Zawislak, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
RCCSD
2916 Duncan Road
Wilmington, DE 19808

Dear Dr. Zawislak:

Here are the responses to the recommendations that appear in the Accountability Committee Recommendation and Evaluation Report dated March 24, 2004. The summary of recommendations from that report are attached. The responses are as follows:

- 1) While The Charter School of Wilmington may never have had a special education student listed on its rolls, our guidance department has informed me that we have had students who were either classified as special education before coming to Charter or who could qualify as special education. The needs of such students have been met by doing such things as scheduling less than the required number of courses while accommodating the desires of the parents to classify the students as regular. In the last few years I have been contacted by at least two schools recommending special education students for admission. In both instances the students or their parents elected not to attend. I will work with our feeder schools to develop a better rapport in locating likely candidates.
- 2) The preparation of a rental agreement is in progress.
- 3) After contacting Terry Anderson at DOE the procedure for timely and accurately reporting disciplinary incidents is now for our Dean of Students, Mr. Jeff Kosinski, to report all requested information in DELSIS within five days of a reportable incident.
- 4) A copy of the written procedures for conducting the September 30th count and for notifying school districts in a timely fashion is included with this report. The original procedures were sent to Mr. Raymond T. Stevens, Jr., CGFM, Administrative Auditor for the State of Delaware on July 9, 2003.
- 5) The review of the admissions data will be an ongoing process.

As we have discussed, The Charter School of Wilmington will be in compliance with state law in its admissions process and will use preferences as allowed by law.

Submitted by,



Ronald R. Russo
President

THE

CHARTER SCHOOL

O F W I L M I N G T O N

**Procedures For
September 30th District Counts**

- 1) Student application information is entered onto WinSchool and FileMaker Pro internal database. FileMaker Pro database is used for word processing and tracking capabilities.
- 2) Prepare file folders for each student.
- 3) Enter student ID numbers from DELSIS.
- 4) Access electronic District Roster provided by Pat Dunn. Cut and paste the student information from Filemaker Pro onto District Roster.
- 5) To ensure accuracy, verify that the information on the District Roster is correct by comparing it to the Filemaker Pro database.
- 6) On September 30, the attendance person will run an attendance report on WinSchool to determine if any students were absent from September 20th-30th.
- 7) If any students were not present for ten days during this period, his/her name will be removed from the District Roster submitted to Pat Dunn and the School Districts, unless there is medical documentation to support his/her absence.
- 8) Submit The Charter School of Wilmington roster to Pat Dunn, Department of Education, electronically. The roster should be submitted prior to the deadline date.
- 9) Submit The Charter School of Wilmington roster signature pages to Pat Dunn, Department of Education, John G. Townsend Building, PO Box 1402, Dover DE 19903-1402. . The signature pages should be submitted prior to the deadline date.
- 10) Submit District Roster to all school districts who have students enrolled at The Charter School of Wilmington. Call the Department of Education in September for the names of the contacts in each district since they are subject to change year to year. The rosters should be submitted prior to the deadline date.
- 11) Make copies of all letters and rosters sent to Pat Dunn and the school districts.