

Delaware Department of Education  
Charter School Annual Report

Charter School Information

School Name: Academy of Dover Charter School

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Cheri Marshall  
Head of School

11-30-15  
Date

[Signature]  
Board President

11/30/15  
Date

## **I. Charter School Program**

### **Narrative:**

***Provide a Synopsis of the School's Mission and Educational Program, Including Key Components of the Education Model and Any Unique or Innovative Features of the School***

***Discuss Key Accomplishments of the Charter School Program over the 2014-15 School Year***

The Academy of Dover serves grades Kindergarten (K) through five (5) with a population of 290 students as of September 30, 2014. During the 2014-15 school year, the school population was 81% African American, 9% Caucasian, 9% Hispanic/Latino (a) and 1% other with the following identifications: 1.4% English language learner, 64.8% low income and 11.7% special education. Average class size for the school was between 15 and 20 students per teacher.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Academy of Dover is to open portals of opportunity for children and adults in the community through excellence in public education.

Per its currently approved charter, the Academy of Dover offers a 200-day school year to increase academic learning time for its students. In addition to engaging in an extended year comprised of standards-based instruction in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies, all students participate in Spanish, Art, Music and Physical Education.

### **Vision Statement**

The Academy of Dover believes that by creating and nurturing a small school environment that is characterized by individualized responsiveness to student needs, high expectations for students and staff, rigorous academic and behavioral standards, and a never-ending passion for learning, we will ensure that each of our students, - regardless of race, language spoken at home, or socio-economic status - has the early foundation necessary to excel both academically and globally in any future endeavor.

## **II. Performance Reflection**

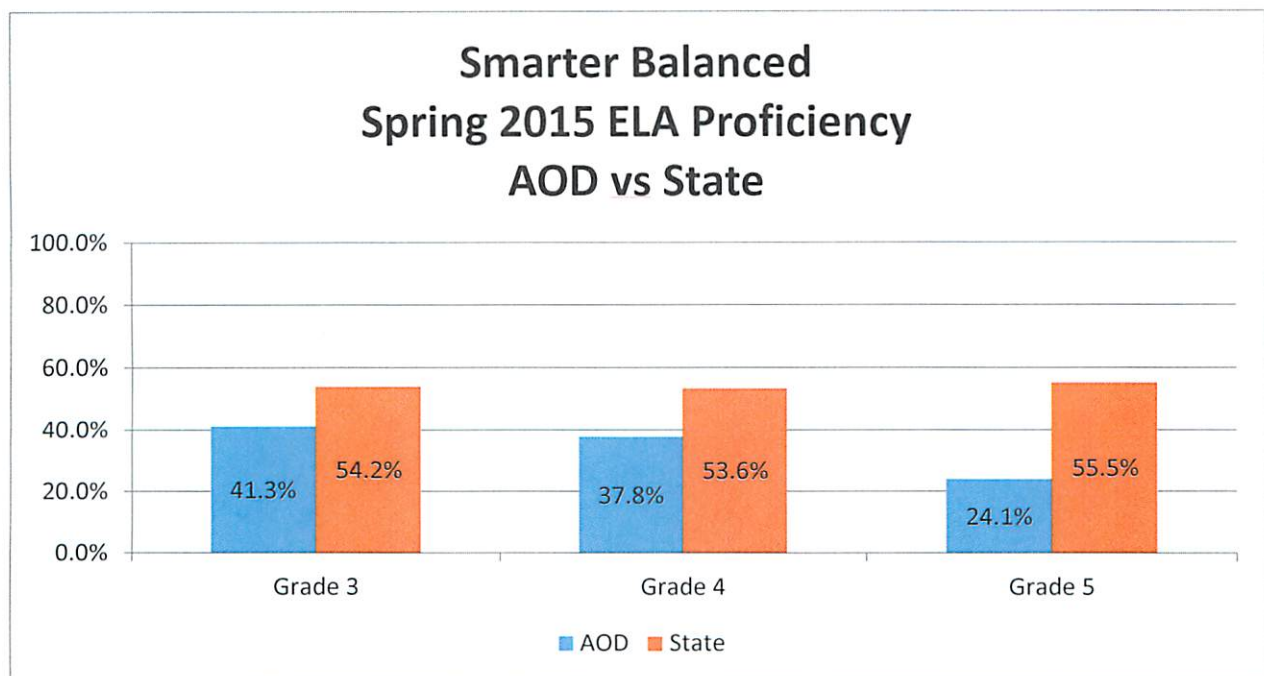
Please Complete the Questions that Match the Charter School's Performance Tier.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
“Meets Standard” overall ratings on all of the following: - 2013-14 and 2014-15 Org Frameworks - 2013-14 and 2014-15 Financial Frameworks - 2013-14 Academic Frameworks	“Meets Standard” overall Ratings on one or more Performance Framework reports during 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years OR Opened in 2014-15 School Year, Never on Formal Review	At any point during 2014-15 school year: - Renewed with Conditions - Placed on Formal Review - Earned “Falls Far Below Standard” on any Framework Report

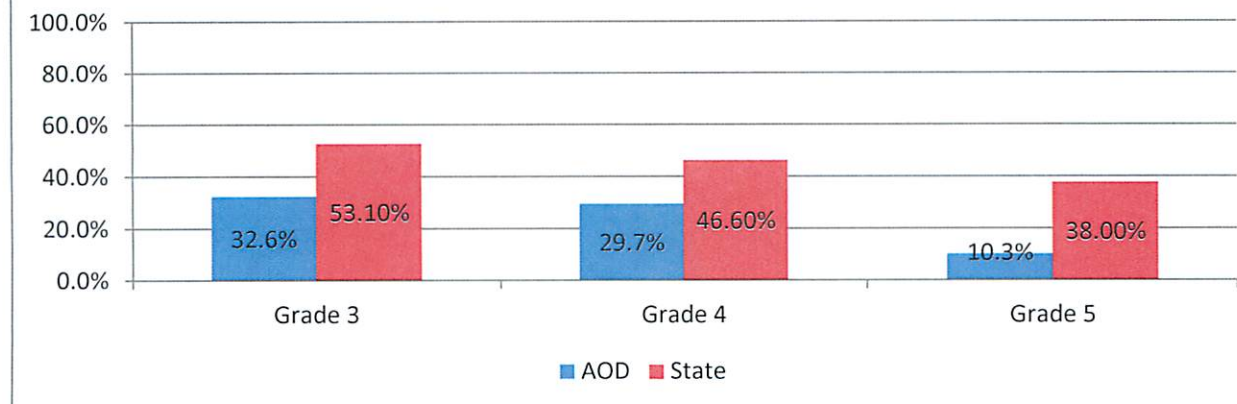
**Tier 3 Narrative:**

*What are the school’s academic performance outcomes that will demonstrate student growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness levels as measured by the Performance Framework? Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas.*

The Academy of Dover continues to make forward progress and academic growth. During the 2014-15 school year, the Academy of Dover, along with all other public schools in the state, implemented the new Smarter Balanced State Assessment (SBAC) for the first time. The following data represents the academic performance of students at AOD on the SBAC in 2014-2015 for grades 3-5 in comparison to the state for ELA and Math.



## Smarter Balanced Spring 2015 Math Proficiency AOD vs State



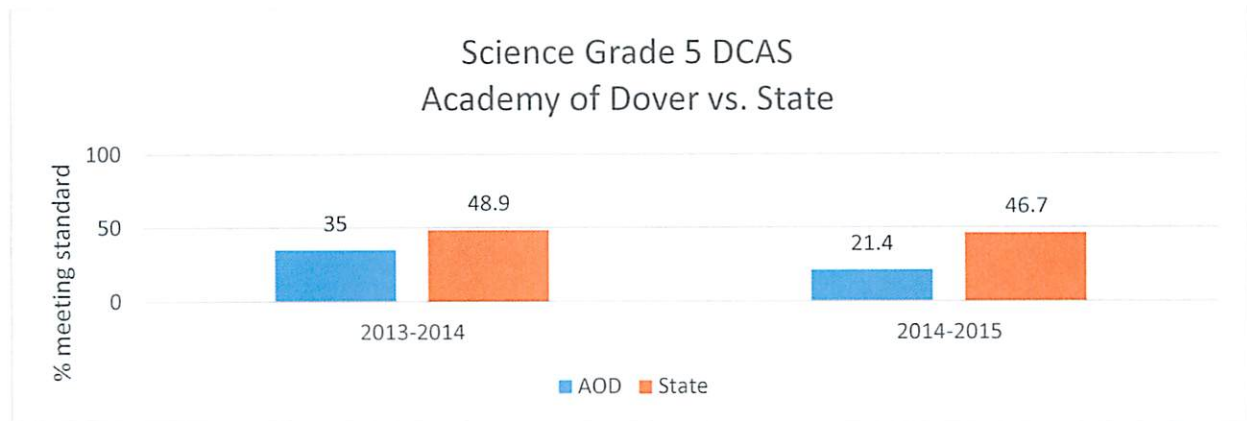
In both reading and math, the state outperformed AOD students. Given that this was the first year of implementation, it was expected that scores would be lower. The school as a whole realize that changes need to be made in order for our students to be successful. Based on the data, the school will be focusing on the following instructional priorities:

- Teachers will conduct a data analysis of instructional needs of each student in order to improve their skills for the math content areas.
- AOD will establish an after school SBAC Boot Camp program that will support the instructional needs of the students who show deficiencies in these priority areas.
- SBAC test prep math books were purchased for all students to allow extra practice and preparation of the Smarter Balanced assessment.
- Instructional walkthroughs will be conducted to ensure that expectations and best practices are being followed in the classrooms.

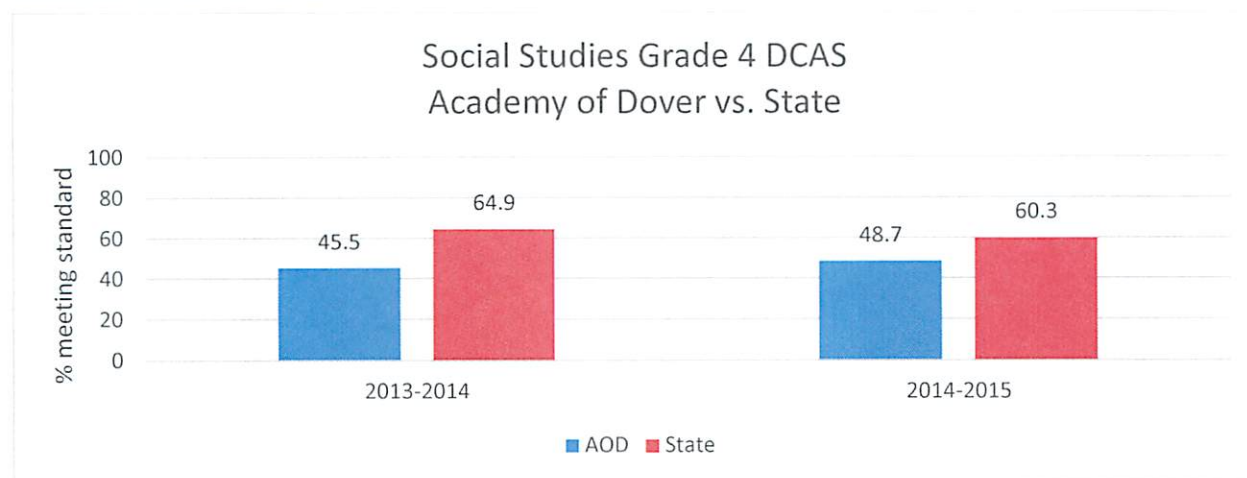
In addition to the items listed above, AOD has contracted with an outside source to provide ongoing training and support for all K-5 teachers on curriculum mapping and doing a gap analysis of our current curriculum. AOD has worked to strengthen our RTI program. Beginning in the 2014-15 school year AOD created a Math Specialist position. Each grade has an RTI block of 30 minutes built into their daily schedule. During this time students in Tier 3 receive small group instruction provided by the Math and Reading Specialists. Students in Tier 2 receive

additional small group instruction from the classroom teacher and RTI paraprofessional, and Tier 1 students engage in enrichment activities in the classroom.

The following charts show our Science and Social Studies scores during the 2014-15 school year.



This chart shows a decrease in Science test scores from 2013-14 to 2014-15 school year for both the state and AOD.



This chart shows a slight increase in AOD's scores and a slight decrease in the state scores from the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school year. AOD is working to improve these scores by providing extra support and training to teachers. This year we have worked with University of Delaware to provide support for our teachers in Social Studies. They have begun working with teachers on the Delaware Recommended Curriculum and provided information around the SS standards. Teachers have also created curriculum maps for Science and SS as well. All teachers continue to receive professional development on the Science Kits and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Academy of Dover recognizes that our scores have been low and are working to increase them across all grades.

***List Any Academic Performance Conditions That Were Placed Upon the Charter School during the 2014-15 School Year and Discuss the Changes that the Charter School Made In Response***

Academy of Dover was placed on Formal Review during the 14-15 school year. Currently, the school remains on probation for one year, ending June 2016. It was noted that AOD's academic performance declined during the 13-14 school year. At that time, data was not yet reported for the 14-15 state test. As part of the probation, AOD is required to provide the Department of Education with ongoing academic performance throughout the 15-16 school year. In addition, it was noted that AOD's assessments were primarily skills based versus standards based. The information listed above demonstrates some of the changes that have been implemented. Other changes are in the planning and research stages. AOD is currently researching the SRI and SMI programs for the 2016-17 school year. These may potentially replace the schools' current DIBELS program. Teachers will also begin digging into the assessments used in the classroom and work to ensure that they are more standards based. Teachers have created yearlong curriculum plans and performed a gap analysis. By doing so, teachers have learned a lot about the standards and are using standards to drive instruction.

***Discuss the Charter School's Organizational Compliance and Soundness during the 2014-15 School Year***

AOD's Organization Framework report for the 14-15 school year reflected an overall rating of 'Does Not Meet Standard' in 5 out of 13 areas. Incidences that occurred during this time were made public with the release of the Auditor's Report in June 2015. The findings in this report had a major impact in the school's organizational compliance. AOD has worked to correct these requirements.

***Discuss the Charter School's Actions to Continue Improving Organizational Soundness and Compliance Each Year.***

AOD will continue to meet requirements set forth in the Organization Framework. The following section outlines changes that have been implemented as well as plans for continuing to meet these expectations.

***What are the school's performance expectations in meeting its organizational responsibilities including, but not limited to, administrative operations, reporting, and legal responsibilities as measured by the Performance Framework? Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas.***

During the 2014-15 school year, AOD underwent a leadership change. An interim Head of School was brought in while the Board conducted a Head of School search. A replacement was named in February 2015. Since then, the school has been working to correct the financial management and reporting requirements.

**Financial Management and Oversight:**

- AOD created a Citizen's Budget Oversight Committee, and after a rocky start, the committee now holds seven members. The committee meets quarterly to ensure all policies are being followed.
- Policies such as the P-Card Policy and Internal Control Policy have been created, approved, and submitted to the Division of Accounting.
- Beginning in the fall of 2015, AOD's Head of School will be evaluated under the Delaware Performance Appraisal System for Principals. The Board President attended the necessary DPAS II training and will be conducting these evaluations.

**Governance and Reporting:**

- Since the school was placed on Probation, the Board has recruited new members and holds consistent monthly board meetings. In the past, AOD had a difficult time filling board chairs. AOD has recently added two new board members, giving our Board a total of ten members. The Board members attended required financial training.
- All agendas, Board minutes and Financials are posted on the school's website in a timely manner and compliance has been met the past few months.

**Students and Employees:**

- During the 2014-15 school year, AOD had 93.5% of teachers meet the Highly Qualified requirement. AOD has made staffing changes and all teachers will follow proper procedures to meet this requirement, such as taking the HQT survey or taking the necessary Praxis 2 exam. All novice teachers participate in the 3 year New Teacher Mentoring Program.
- All staff were recently involved in revising AOD's Vision Statement, which was approved by the Board of Directors.

The changes listed above will ensure compliance of the school's operation moving forward.

Over the past year, AOD has gone through many challenges, especially in dealing with a financial mismanagement and all the problems that arise from that. However, we will continue to strengthen the school as a whole. Staff, students, parents and community members continue to support Academy of Dover and believe in our "Small School with a Big Vision". With this continued support and improvement of school wide programs, AOD will continue to meet the expectations and requirements set forth.

***List Any Organizational Health Conditions That Were Placed Upon the Charter School during the 2014-15 School Year and Discuss the Changes that the Charter School Made In Response***

As part of the school's probation, the following financial condition was placed on AOD:

1. *All members of the school's board of directors shall participate in training offered by the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement by October 1<sup>st</sup>.*

AOD submitted verification of these trainings to DOE. Therefore, this condition has been met.

2. *All members of the school's board of directors shall participate in training offered by the Public Integrity Commission by October 1<sup>st</sup>.*

AOD submitted verification of these trainings to DOE. Therefore, this condition has been met.

3. *The school shall establish regular board oversight committee meetings by October 1<sup>st</sup>.*

AOD submitted the requested information. Therefore, this condition has been met.

4. *The school shall continue to hold monthly CBOC meetings and post the required documentation from each meeting to its website within the time required by law.*

After AOD was put on formal review in June 2015, the school began holding CBOC meetings.

The first two months (June and July) there were not enough members present to hold a



quorum. Due to the fact that these were summer months, members were on vacations, out of town, etc. Since August 2015, the CBOC has been meeting regularly and the committee has since added on three new members. The DOE representative is also part of these meetings. Agendas and minutes from the CBOC are posted in the required timeline.

5. *The school shall submit evidence of ongoing academic progress by December 1<sup>st</sup>.*

This documentation is currently being completed and will meet the expected deadline.

***What are the school's financial performance expectations that will demonstrate viability and sustainability as measured by the Performance Framework? Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas.***

The Academy of Dover recently completed a crucial step to improve its financial viability as measured by the Performance Framework. In June 2015, AOD agreed to a settlement with Mosaica Education which reduced the award to a total of \$650,000.00 and eliminated all future interest and legal expenses. A payment of \$350,000.00 was made in June 2015 and a second payment of \$150,000.00 was made in July 2015. Three additional payments of \$50,000.00 each will be made in July 2016, July 2017, and July 2018 to complete the obligation. A total of \$500,000.00 was removed from our local fund reserve within the last six months which had a negative effect on a number of the Performance Framework Indicators.

Our major challenge now is to improve our local fund reserves. Since our major source of revenue is from state and local school districts, the best opportunity to increase revenue is to increase our student enrollment. Our student enrollment for the current school year is 284 students, but our charter would permit us to enroll 310 students. During the current school year, the Academy of Dover received an average of \$10,000.00 per student from state and local school districts. If our student enrollment increased from 284 to 310 students for the 2016-17 school year, we would receive approximately \$260,000.00 in additional revenue. There would be some additional expenses, but since the fixed costs such as rent, bus transportation, insurance, utilities, etc. are already covered by the first 284 students, there would be extra funds available to place in our reserve.

We are already discussing methods to involve teachers, staff, students, and parents to assist in recruiting students for the upcoming school year. We also are reviewing every expense category to determine if there are areas which can be reduced in the future without negatively affecting our educational program. Some examples will include a conversation with our landlord regarding a decrease in the monthly rent, as well as monitoring our utility expenses for savings. There were also significant expenses for legal fees associated with the Mosaica settlement, so these expenses should be reduced in the future.

The October 2015 monthly financial report illustrates our latest evidence of financial viability and sustainability. This budget for October 2015 covers 33.3% of the fiscal year and our expenditures equal 34.6% of the budget for the current fiscal year, which contains a 2% contingency reserve. The required \$150,000.00 payment to Mosaica has already been paid in July 2015, so if we remove the Mosaica payment from the budget and expenditures, the expenditures would equal 31.7% of the budget and would be in line for the current fiscal year. Our discussions also have included searching for appropriate grants and some fundraisers as sources of additional revenue.

***List Any Financial Health Conditions That Were Placed Upon the Charter School during the 2014-15 School Year and Discuss the Changes that the Charter School Made In Response***

As part of the school's probation, the following financial condition was placed on AOD:

- 1. The school shall submit copies of updated financial management and oversight procedures by August 1.*

AOD created and submitted a Payroll Internal Control Policy and a P-Card Internal Control Policy on July 31<sup>st</sup>. Board members completed the required training for DANA, PIC, and finance training from DOE. Copies of their certificates were sent to DOE. Newly appointed members will be required to attend these trainings as well.