

DELAWARE CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

CHARTER SCHOOL INFORMATION

Charter School Name: Las Américas ASPIRA Academy

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Margie López Waite
Head of School

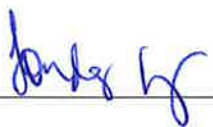


November 27, 2013
Date

Head of School

Date

Lourdes Puig
Board President



November 27, 2013
Date

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: December 1st (September 30th for renewing charter schools)

All schools submit one (1) signed copy (PDF via email preferred) to the DDOE Charter School Office

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ABSTRACT

Our History

Las Américas ASPIRA Academy (LAAA) began as a vision among a group of advocates in the Hispanic community committed to providing an educational alternative within the public school system. In 2009, the Delaware Department of Education with the assent of the State Board of Education approved the school's charter application. The opening of our school was delayed one year due to challenges in securing a long-term facility for the school. In August 2011, LAAA celebrated their grand opening with an enrollment of 303 students (101% of goal) in its current location in Newark (326 Ruthar Drive). In our second year of operation (2012-2013), we achieved 105% of our enrollment goal with 338 students. Our enrollment was determined by lottery for Year 2 (2012-2013) and Year 3 (2013-2014) with a waiting list that continues to increase each year. LAAA's targeted population is students residing in Delaware.

LAAA is the direct outgrowth of the mission of ASPIRA of Delaware, Inc., an associate office of the national ASPIRA Association. ASPIRA, since its start with ASPIRA New York, has had over fifty years of experience creating and implementing formal and informal education programs that build up youth self-esteem, cultural awareness, and leadership abilities. ASPIRA associate offices successfully operate eleven charter schools in 3 cities: Philadelphia, Miami and Chicago. Originally founded as a Puerto-Rican organization, ASPIRA Associate Offices in the 6 states of Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Florida and Illinois and the commonwealth of Puerto Rico now serve a diverse population of youth, with the specific mission to empower the Puerto Rican and Latino community through advocacy and the education and leadership development of its youth.

Mission

The mission of the **Las Américas ASPIRA Academy (LAAA)** is to provide a world-class education that prepares students through a dual language project-based learning curriculum, to become healthy productive community members and leaders, with an **expectation** that **every** child, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic level, is college bound.

Philosophy

The philosophy Las Américas ASPIRA Academy (LAAA) is that students learn best through doing (project-based learning) and that students can become fully bi-literate in English and Spanish, if students are taught early on through a dual-language approach. And because research shows that students who are healthy and active perform better in the classroom, Las Américas ASPIRA Academy (LAAA) will integrate physical fitness and good nutrition as core components of its rigorous project-based learning curriculum.

The academic, physical, social, and emotional development of our students rests on:

- ASPIRA Principles of Awareness, Analysis and Action
- Setting high expectations for each student, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or socio-economic level, where **every** student is college-bound
- Building on the first language of English Language Learners to increase their academic performance

- Enriching the education of English speaking children by having them achieve literacy and fluency in a second language
- Making real-world connections for all learning
- Creating a healthy personalized school environment that is positive and student centered, focused on cross-cultural understanding
- Facilitating learning through investigations, interactions, and dual language instruction that is intellectually challenging and developmentally appropriate
- Providing ongoing professional development to teachers and staff in order to keep them abreast with the best research-based teaching practices
- Using systematic qualitative and quantitative student assessment to drive and strengthen instruction
- Creating a strong partnership between parents, community, private sectors, teachers and staff to increase overall educational achievement and attainment

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:

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.

Academic Performance Review Rating:

2011-2012 Summary and Overall Rating: DOES NOT MEET STANDARD

2012-2013 Summary and Overall Rating: MEETS STANDARD

During the past two years, LAAA has made significant gains in our academic achievement results. Our overall rating improved from Does Not Meet Standard in Year 1 to Meets Standard in Year 2. LAAA accomplished consistent growth in ELA with scores exceeding State average in some categories. The biggest opportunity for improvement exists with Math scores. In response to this need, we are supplementing our math program with targeted instruction for students performing below grade level.

The Delaware Academic Performance Framework reveals the following achievements and opportunities for growth:

Strengths

- Students at LAAA are making enough annual growth to maintain or achieve proficiency status within 3 years or by 10th grade (69.7% for Math and 80.6% for ELA).
- LAAA's students are exceeding State average in ELA proficiency (72.9% for LAAA vs. 70.1% for State). LAAA's proficiency rates in ELA increased from 2012 to 2013 by 5 points (67.9% to 72.9%) while the State average decreased by 6 points (76.1% to 70.1%).
- LAAA's Low Socio-Economic students' 2013 proficiency rates in ELA are higher than the State average (64.6% for LAAA vs. 64.2% for State). LAAA's proficiency rates in ELA increased from 2012 to 2013 by 8 points (56.6% to 64.6%) while the State average decreased by 3.2 points (67.4% to 64.2%).
- LAAA's English Language Learners (ELLs) students' proficiency rates in Math and ELA exceeded the State average (41.9% vs. 38.3% in Math and 59.7% vs. 31.8% in ELA). LAAA's proficiency in ELA earned a rating of Meets Standard.
- LAAA's Hispanic students' 2013 proficiency rates in ELA are higher than the State average (66.3% for LAAA vs. 63.9% for State). LAAA's proficiency rates in ELA increased from 2012 to 2013 by 3.4 points (62.9% to 66.3%) while the State average decreased by 0.7 points (64.6% to 63.9%).
- LAAA's White students' 2013 proficiency rates in ELA are higher than the State average (81.8% for LAAA vs. 80.8% for State).

Challenges/Opportunities for Growth

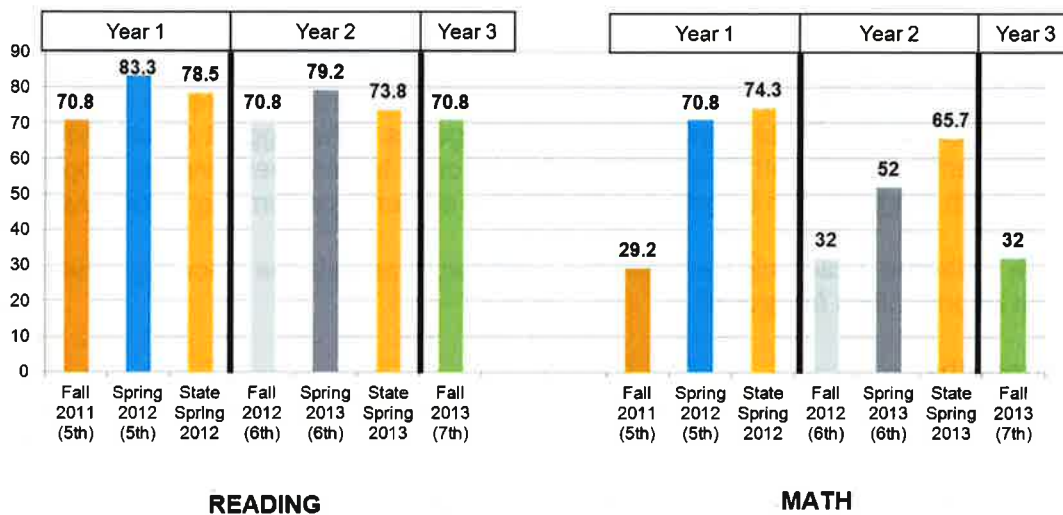
- LAAA's students were not as proficient in Math compared to the state average (57.4% for LAAA vs. 68.0% for state).

- LAAA's Low Socio-Economic students' 2013 proficiency rates in Math were below the State average (47.6% for LAAA vs. 61.4% for State).
- Although LAAA's ELL students' proficiency in Math exceeded the State average, it was still considered Below Standard (41.9% for LAAA vs. 38.3% for State average) due to being below State's proficiency rate at the 90th percentile (54.8%).
- LAAA's Hispanic and White students' 2013 proficiency rates in Math were below the State average (Hispanic: 48.9% for LAAA vs. 63.4% for State; White: 72.7% for LAAA vs. 79.7% for State).

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities for Growth – Detailed Data by Class

- **Class of 2019**

Percentage of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standard



➤ **Strengths**

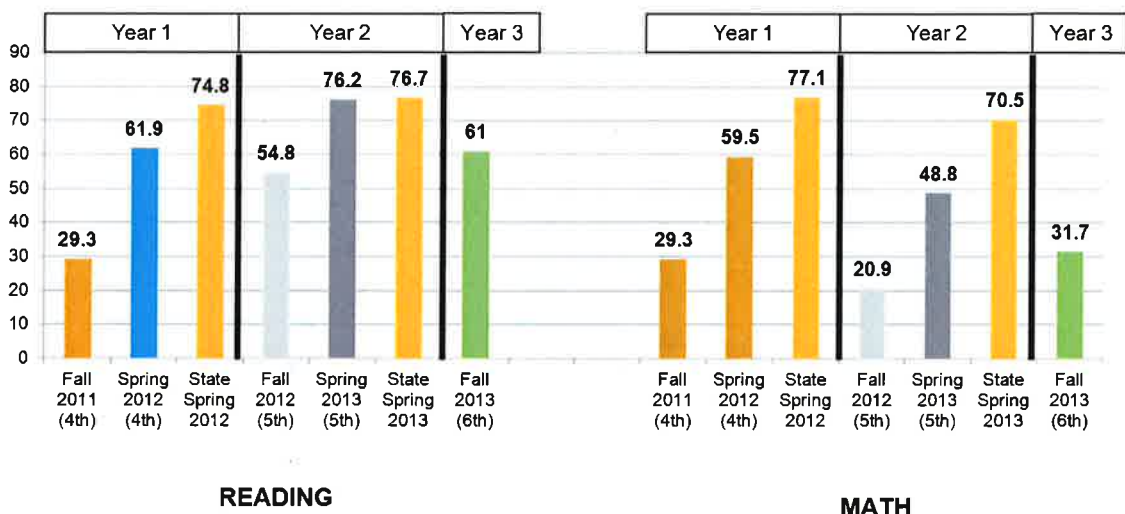
- Reading growth in Year 1 exceeded state average (83.3% vs. 78.5%)
- Reading scores decreased less in Year 2 compared to the state average (decrease of 4.7 points for state vs. 4.1 for LAAA)
- Math growth in Year 1 was over 58% for LAAA (from 29.2% to 70.8%)

➤ **Challenges/Opportunities for Growth**

- Reading scores decreased in Year 2; although the decrease was less than the decrease in the state average (decrease of 4.7 points for state vs. 4.1 for LAAA)
- Math growth in Year 1 was 3.5 points lower than state average
- Math scores decreased statewide in Year 2 by 8.6 points vs. 18.8 for LAAA

▪ **Class of 2020**

Percentage of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standard



➤ **Strengths**

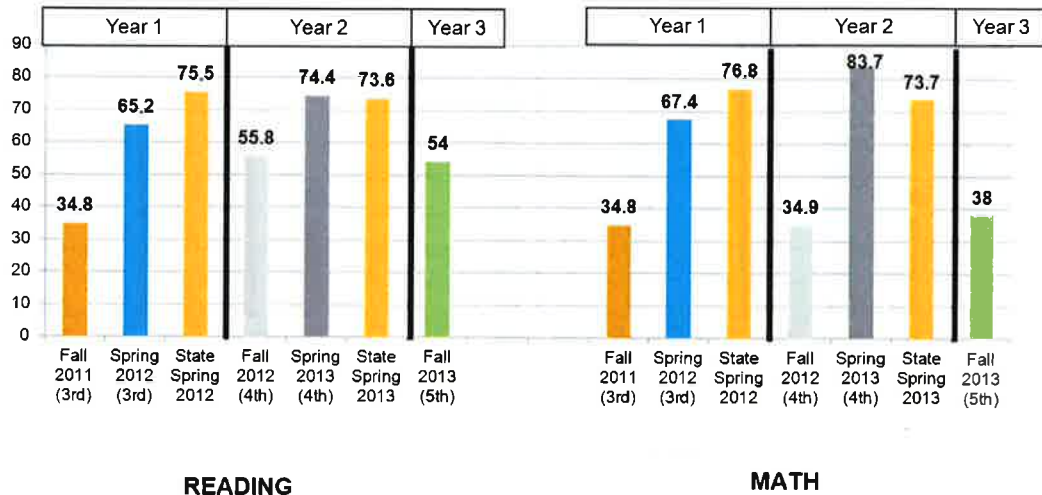
- Reading growth in Year 1 was over 52% (29.3% vs. 61.9%)
- Reading growth in Year 2 was 28% for LAAA and only .5 points lower than state average (76.2% vs. 76.7%)
- Fall Reading scores for Year 3 are the highest so far (positive trend)
- Math growth in Year 1 was over 50% (29.3% vs. 59.5%)
- Fall Math scores for Year 3 are the highest so far (positive trend)

➤ **Challenges/Opportunities for Growth**

- Reading growth in Year 1 was lower than state average (61.9% vs. 74.8%)
- Math growth in Year 1 was 17.6 points lower than state average (59.5% vs. 77.1%)
- Math scores decreased statewide in Year 2 by 6.6 points vs. 10.7 for LAAA

- **Class of 2021**

Percentage of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standard



➤ **Strengths**

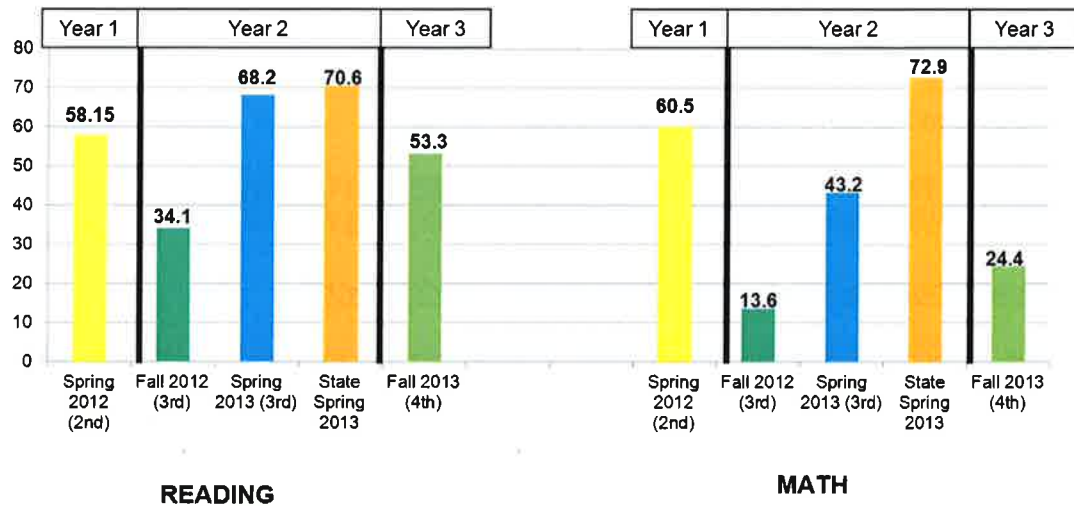
- Reading growth in Year 1 was 47% (34.8% vs. 65.2%)
- Reading growth in Year 2 exceeded state average (74.4% vs. 73.6%); represents a 12% increase from Year 1 vs. 3% decrease for the state average
- Fall Reading scores for Year 3 is comparable to Year 2 (consistent trend)
- Math growth in Year 1 was over 48% (34.8% vs. 67.4%)
- Math growth for Year 2 exceeded state average (83.7% vs. 73.7%) which represented an increase of 16.3 points for LAAA and decrease of 3.1 points for the state average
- Fall Math scores for Year 3 are the highest so far (positive trend)

➤ **Challenges/Opportunities for Growth**

- Reading growth in Year 1 was 10.3 points lower than state average (65.2% vs. 75.5%)
- Math growth in Year 1 was 9.4 points lower than state average (67.4% vs. 76.8%)

▪ **Class of 2022**

Percentage of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standard



➤ **Strengths**

- Reading growth in Year 2 was 50% (34.1% vs. 68.2%)
- Fall Reading scores for Year 3 are the highest so far (positive trend)
- Math growth in Year 2 was 69% (13.6% vs. 43.2%)
- Math Reading scores for Year 3 are the highest so far (positive trend)

➤ **Challenges/Opportunities for Growth**

- Reading growth in Year 2 was 2.4 points lower than state average (68.2% vs. 70.6%)
- Math growth in Year 2 was 29.7 points lower than state average (43.2% vs. 72.9%)

Note: These students were 2nd graders in Year 1, so testing was completed in Spring 2012 for benchmarking purposes only.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE:

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.

Financial Performance Review Rating:

2011-2012 Summary and Overall Rating: MEETS STANDARD

2012-2013 Summary and Overall Rating: MEETS STANDARD

Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities for Growth

Las Américas ASPIRA Academy had another strong year, ending with a financial surplus for its second straight year. The school increased its cash carryover of \$514,000 for school year 2011-2012 to \$561,000 for year 2012-2013. We were faced with the difficult challenge of securing the necessary funding for Phase II construction, a \$1.3 million project to expand the school by 13 classrooms to accommodate the enrollment growth for the start of the 2013-2014 school year. Additionally, Las Américas ASPIRA Academy, made a strategic decision to pay down \$221,000 as part of a principal reduction to the original Building Hope loan that was used to finance the school's construction for its first two years of operations. Overall, Las Américas ASPIRA Academy had a \$514,000 debt principal reduction in 2012-2013; however, the school still increased its cash reserves.

The school, though only in its 3rd year of operation, has shown the ability to favorably manage its finances while completing a school start-up and its second phase of construction. For the past two years we have been at enrollment capacity (105%), thus putting our enrollment at 439 K-7th grade students this year. Our large waiting list of students gives us the ability to manage our enrollment to ensure we reach capacity (as shown the last two years), thus ensuring our funding is at a maximum level each year. To date, our enrollment applications for the 2014-2015 school year show we will once again hold a lottery and maintain a substantial waiting list.

We realize the revenue benefits of a continued increase in student enrollment; however, because of the increased debt due to the Phase II construction, this school year will be our most challenging year to date. The inability to acquire a significant loan to fund the entire construction project will force us to use carryover money from our cash surplus. This is shown in our FY14 preliminary budget and will also show in the final budget. That being said, the school will continue to do everything it can to supplement revenue through fundraising and deploying its newly formed Development Committee charged to spearhead the school's capital campaign. We will continue to grow, promote and build on our schools overall success resulting from its first two years of operation.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE:

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.

Organizational Performance Review Rating:**2011-2012 Summary and Overall Rating: MEETS STANDARD****2012-2013 Summary and Overall Rating: DOES NOT MEETS STANDARD****Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities for Growth**

The school's overall organizational performance targets were not met. Out of 13 measures that make up the overall rating, the school received 10 ratings of "Meets" and three ratings of "Does not Meets Standard;" specifically for measures 2, 4.c. and 5.b. Las Américas ASPIRA Academy does not take these results lightly and corrective measures are now in place to correct the audit deficiencies (one material finding) and staff credentialing deficiencies. Also, the school will ensure the health and safety annual reporting requirements are achieved through timely submissions. Las Américas ASPIRA Academy has had compliance visits from DDOE which showed the school has been compliant with all components of the DPAS II evaluation system, Title I programs, IDEA and the National School Lunch program. The school also meets all State Department of Health guidelines, which is evident by passing our first health inspection (1/30/13). Additionally, evidence of the school's compliance with operational expectations can be found in compliance monitoring reports issued by DDOE over the last two years, which is the duration of our school's existence. The most recent reports (2012) state that Las Américas ASPIRA Academy is in compliance with all monitored regulations, including but not limited to: McKinney-Vento Homeless Act, Child Abuse Reporting Training, immunization audit and policy regarding the release of students to persons other than parent/guardian.

The school will continue to strengthen its internal capacity for meeting organizational performance expectations. We are now in our third year of operations, and it has proven to be a difficult task to keep up with the many (and changing) regulations. The school has purposely used its funds and resources to primarily support the classrooms in building a world class educational environment, thus keeping administrative and support staff hiring at a minimum. This strategy, though taxing on the few administrators employed at the school, has shown to produce solid and growing results in the academic and financial performance of the school for its first two years. Additionally, staff and student retention rates are very high thus enabling to our success. The school is now in the process of evaluating its current staffing model, job responsibilities for the schools administrators, and its overall growth plan for the future. We realize the importance of having the required infrastructure to support all areas of the school's business (finance and human resources) to enable the school to have compliance in all operational areas. We fully expect to achieve an overall rating of "Meets Standard" in 2013-2014.

STATUS OF CONDITIONS PLACED UPON THE CHARTER:

Include:

- A status update of any conditions imposed upon the school's charter,
- Your plan to meet any conditions that are currently "not met".

On June 17, 2010 the State Board of Education approved LAAA's request to delay opening the school until August 2011. When our charter was originally approved there were 30 conditions imposed by the State Board. At the time of delay some of those conditions had been met; therefore, the new list of conditions contained 21 conditions.

The following conditions are ongoing conditions without a defined due date and have been met each year of operation:

- 1. The Board of Directors of the school, its employees, agents and contractors, shall comply with all obligations imposed upon them by law, shall comply with the provisions of the corporate charter, by-laws and resolutions, and shall further comply with any applicable rule or regulation, all of which are imposed as conditions to approval of this charter.
- 2. No part of the school's corporate charter or by-laws shall be amended, altered, repealed, restated or otherwise modified without the prior written consent of the Department of Education, except that the number of directors may be increased or decreased without the Department's consent, provided that any such change shall be limited to the number of directors only and not the qualifications thereof; and further provided that any such change shall otherwise be consistent with any applicable law, rule or regulation.
- 3. The Board of Directors shall ensure that school is and remains in compliance with any student, educator, and school achievement performance requirements now and hereafter in effect in Delaware Code or Regulation.
- 4. The Board of Directors shall not charge or collect any fee not permitted to be assessed by a school district. These include but are not limited to fees to any students applying for admission and fees for the use of instructional materials.
- 5. Each month the charter school financial reports shall be posted monthly on the charter school website and shall be provided in writing upon request pursuant to 14 Del. C. § 122(11).
- 6. The Board of Directors shall have adequate liability insurance in force prior to hiring any school employee. The board of directors shall submit evidence of adequate liability insurance to the Department upon hiring the first employee.
- 7. The Board of Directors shall ensure that the school is in full compliance at all times with the requirements for background checks as stated in 11 Delaware Code, Chapter 85, and Subchapter VI.
- 8. Prior to the school opening for instruction, the Board of Directors shall submit written verification to the Department that it has hired a Delaware Registered Nurse and verification that the nurse has attended the summer school nurse orientation

program provided by the Department and that the nurse will be part of any IEP team as necessary.

- 9. The Board of Directors shall ensure that the schools submit data requested or required by the Department in any form, including electronically, in accordance with timelines in the Department's Data Acquisition Calendar.

The following conditions were met by the specific due date:

- 10. By August 1, 2010, the Board of Directors shall submit revised budget to the Department reflecting no federal start-up funds, if necessary.
- 11. By October 15, 2010, the Board of Directors shall have consulted with designated staff in the Department's Curriculum Workgroup and submitted to the Department for review and approval, a fully developed curriculum that is aligned with the Delaware content standards in all subject areas at each grade the school will offer during the initial four year charter term. Specifically, the Board of Directors will submit aligned curriculum, including three units of instruction, a course scope and sequence, summative unit assessments and scoring rubrics for the three submitted units in the content area, and a summary table showing the explicit links between the instructional program and the Delaware Academic Standards and grade level expectations (GLEs) for the following content area: Mathematics.
- 12. By December 15, 2010, the Board of Directors shall submit to the Department a copy of the signed lease or purchase agreement, description of the facilities, and description of the budget revisions required by the acquisition of the facilities and preparation of the facilities for school opening. Further, the Board of Directors shall submit to the Department for review and approval the construction/renovation plan for the school facilities. The plan shall provide satisfactory details on the tasks to be completed to prepare the completion and assignment of responsibilities. The school will be required to demonstrate satisfactory progress in completing projected construction/renovation tasks until the submission of the Certificate of Occupancy on or before June 15, 2011.
- 13. By February 15, 2011, the Board of Directors shall submit to the Department for approval proposed Performance Agreement specifying measurable objectives with annual targets that is acceptable to the Secretary. In the event that further revisions are needed, the Board of Directors shall make such revisions and resubmit the Performance Agreement within ten days of receiving notification of the needed revisions.
- 14. By February 15, 2011, the Board of Directors shall submit to the Department for review and approval the plan the school proposes to use for access to DFMS and PHRST beginning with the school's first year of operation. Prior to the school beginning operation, the point of access must be located at the school's primary facility of operation. The plan must meet the security requirements of both DFMS and PHRST.
- 15. By April 1, 2011, and each succeeding year thereafter, the Board of Directors shall submit enrollment rosters to the Department and to each affected school district

in a form satisfactory to the Department that verify that the school has enrolled at least 80% of the total authorized number of students for the following school year.

- 16. By June 15, 2011, the Board of Directors shall submit a Certificate of Occupancy that verifies the premises to be occupied by staff and students.
- 17. By June 30, 2011, the Board of Directors shall have consulted with designated staff in the Department's Exceptional Child and Early Childhood Workgroup to procure training for special education teachers in assessment.
- 18. By August 1, 2011, the Board of Directors shall submit documentation that appropriate staff has been trained on data reporting.
- 19. By September 1, 2011, the Board of Directors shall submit to the Department in a form satisfactory to the Department a listing of its members including addresses and phone numbers, and indicating the names of members representing the teachers employed at the school and the parents of students enrolled at the school. Anytime a new director is elected to the school's Board of Directors, the board shall provide written notice to the Department within ten days of such election. The notice shall include name, address and telephone number of the new director. Within ten days of any change in the address or phone number of any existing member of the board, the board shall provide written notice of the same to the Department including the new address and/or phone number of such board member.
- 20. By September 1, 2011, and each September 1 thereafter the Board of Directors shall submit to the Department in a form satisfactory to the Department a list of the staff employed at the school and that is has employed a sufficient number of certified, highly qualified teachers to comply with the requirements of 14 Del. C. § 507(c). The Board of Directors shall ensure that the Department is notified in writing with 20 calendar days when changes occur in the staff list, including new hires, terminations in employment, and any changes in status and/or assignment.
- 21. Documents related to these conditions must be submitted through the Charter Schools Office at the Department of Education, which will be responsible for distribution within the Department.

STUDENT RETENTION GOALS AND TARGETS:

The percentage of students who have re-enrolled from the prior year according to ESEA demographic categories.

90.2% of the students enrolled in FY 13 returned in FY 14. The schools' demographics for September 30, 2012 were as follows:

Demographic Group	Total	Attrition	% Re-Enrolled
Caucasian	98	15	84.7%
African American	40	4	90.0%
Asian	9	1	88.9%
Multi-Racial	2	0	100.0%
Hispanic	189	13	93.1%
Native American	0	0	100.0%
TOTAL	338	33	90.2%
Low SES	166	20	88.0%
Special Education	8	1	87.5%

This past summer, LAAA had 33 students withdraw at the end of the school year. Three (3) of those students moved out of the state or country. Eight (8) of those students were rising 7th/8th graders and chose to transfer to a junior/senior high school to ease their transition into high school.

The number of students who have left your school before the year is over or before the end of the charter school's grade configuration per ESEA demographic category.

100% of the students who were enrolled on September 30, 2012 remained enrolled through the end of the school year.

A summary of why students chose to leave.

This past summer, LAAA had 33 students withdraw at the end of the school year. Three (3) of those students moved out of the state or country. Eight (8) of those students were rising 7th/8th graders and chose to transfer to a junior/senior high school to ease their transition into high school.

The percentage of students who did not pass from one grade to the next.

14 students were retained at the end of FY 13 – eight KN students, four 1st graders, one 2nd grader and one 5th grade. 43% were Hispanic (6 students), 36% were Caucasian (5 students), 14% were Multi-Racial (2 students), and 7% were African American (1 student).

Your plan to improve student retention and average daily attendance if less than your stated targets.

Average daily attendance goals have been met each year and they have been consistently higher than the state average. Student retention goals have been met every year with average attrition being insignificant. Our waiting list was approximately 400 students. Our attrition does not seem to be linked to any demographic categories or to student achievement.

INNOVATION:

Las Américas ASPIRA Academy (LAAA) is the direct outgrowth of the mission of ASPIRA of Delaware, Inc., an associate office of the national ASPIRA Association. ASPIRA, since its start with ASPIRA New York, has had over fifty years of experience creating and implementing formal and informal education programs that build up youth self-esteem, cultural awareness, and leadership abilities. ASPIRA associate offices successfully operate eleven charter schools in 3 cities: Philadelphia, Miami and Chicago. Originally founded as a Puerto-Rican organization, ASPIRA Associate Offices in the 6 states of Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Florida and Illinois and the commonwealth of Puerto Rico now serve a diverse population of youth, with the specific mission to empower the Puerto Rican and Latino community through advocacy and the education and leadership development of its youth.

The mission of the **Las Américas ASPIRA Academy (LAAA)** is to provide a world-class education that prepares students through a dual language project-based learning curriculum, to become healthy productive community members and leaders, with an **expectation** that **every** child, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic level, is college bound.

The features of the school that are considered innovative, unique or integral to fulfilling the school's mission and philosophy include the following:

Dual Language Instruction

LAAA 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 (2nd-5th in Year 1; 3rd-6th in Year 2) are in the Spanish as a Second Language Program, so they have Spanish class every day all year long similar to other core subjects.

Project-Based Learning

LAAA provides students with a project-based learning curriculum. Developed by the Buck Institute for Education, it is described as follows:

In Project Based Learning (PBL), students go through an extended process of inquiry in response to a complex question, problem, or challenge. While allowing for some degree of student "voice and choice," rigorous projects are carefully planned, managed, and assessed to help students learn key academic content, practice 21st Century Skills (such as collaboration, communication & critical thinking), and create high-quality, authentic products & presentations. Students gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and standards at the heart of a project. Projects also build vital workplace skills and lifelong habits of learning. Projects can allow students to address community issues, explore careers, interact with adult mentors, use technology, and present their work to audiences

beyond the classroom. PBL can motivate students who might otherwise find school boring or meaningless.

School Climate and Culture

LAAA has made it a priority to create an orderly, safe environment to allow teachers to teach and students to learn. Our Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Program recognizes students for doing the right thing and following the School Code of Conduct. The program incorporates Character Education to teach students the six pillars of character. The Student of the Month program recognizes students that demonstrate the Character Trait of the Month. School uniforms have been in place from the beginning to promote discipline, respect, and a focus on learning. Strict absentee and tardiness policies teach students to value the importance of education. Academic Excellence Celebrations are held at the end of each trimester to recognize students achieving President's List and Honor Roll, as well as the Students of the Month.

