

For Immediate Release

Colonial School District enters into partnership to assist DAPSS Charter School

On February 13, 2018, The Colonial School Board of Education approved a proposal to allow the leadership of Colonial to work with Delaware Academy Of Public Safety and Security (DAPSS) charter school on a plan to address systemic academic and operational concerns that have led to low enrollment, poor test scores and being put under formal review for possible closure by the Department of Education (DOE).

DAPSS is a charter high school located in New Castle serving just over 200 students in grades 9-12. Their focus is preparing students for careers as first responders, such as law enforcement, fire fighters and EMTs. Several issues however, have hampered the school's ability to attract and retain students and to provide a rigorous academic program. Colonial's intervention hopes to turn that around. "Not every failing school deserves saving but DAPSS serves a need in our community and could be a great asset, but right now, it's not getting the job done for kids. We think we can help them change that." Dusty Blakey, Superintendent of Colonial stated. "This is really about making sure that all kids in Colonial are getting a great education, even if they choose other options."

Colonial's plan will be presented to the DOE Charter School Accountability Committee, which is conducting the formal review process for DAPSS and will ultimately decide if the school is allowed to remain open past this school year. It involves working with DAPSS to establish various milestones to ensure continued academic progress and if those milestones are met, Colonial would become the charter authorizer when the school is up for renewal in 2019. If the milestones are not met and improvement isn't seen over the next school year, DAPSS would surrender its charter and close after the 2018-2019 school year.

In this partnership, Colonial is offering its services to provide leadership, curriculum development, professional learning opportunities for DAPSS teachers and other services, for which Colonial will be paid as a consultant. "We are not using Colonial dollars to infuse the DAPSS budget in any way. They must become financially stable on their own by increasing their enrollment numbers. We are providing them the framework and guidance to enhance the academic program to make the school more attractive to students who are interested in their mission around first responders" Blakey said.

If the turnaround plan is approved by DOE and is successful, Colonial would become the second school district in the State to authorize a charter school, after Red Clay. Being the authorizer will give the Colonial School Board the role of formal oversight of the school. The President of the DAPSS Board, Margie López Waite expressed excitement about the partnership "DAPSS has a great mission and great kids but we need help to get the school back to where it should be for kids. Colonial can help us do that."