

Frederick Classical Charter School
2013-2014 Annual Report
(Includes updates through January 31, 2015)

Overview of Mission and Vision

The mission of the Frederick Classical Charter School is to provide elementary and middle school-aged children in Frederick County with a well-rounded, college-focused instructional program that develops students' knowledge, reason, and self-expression. The long-term vision of the Frederick Classical Charter School is to be nationally recognized as a replicable model for providing a traditional, rigorous liberal arts education using well-researched instructional approaches. Through its Summer Institute and in-service training, the school will provide teachers with professional development in subject matter content, cognitive science, and research-based pedagogy. The principal, staff, and school improvement team will look first to data and evidence to better school performance, with the guiding criteria that each enhancement should be specific, replicable, and monitored to validate the achievement of its intended results.

Executive Summary of Results

Charter schools are evaluated in three main areas: academics, facility, and finances. Each of these areas are showing promise earlier than the Board of Trustees expected. A common path for a charter school is to start at or below the district's academic scores initially but improve to be above the district in the second charter term, function in an older facility that was not designed for a school for many years before expanding, and face first year fiscal challenges until adding more students in subsequent years brings additional funding to balance the school's budget. Though as a new school we certainly have work to be done in all of these areas, our school is off to a strong start.

- Academics – Our MSA test scores were at or above the state and county averages for all subjects in all grade levels.
- Facility – Thanks to the Board of Education's willingness to directly disburse money to the charter, we were able to expand our facility by renting 10,500 square feet, of which we are able to build out 6,444 square feet. This build out, which includes a new outdoor playground space, is scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2015.
- Finances – Despite only receiving 68% of per pupil amount in cash (the remainder is in services provided by the district) and 0% of the capital budget, our school ran a surplus of over \$200,000. We attribute this to our conservative budgeting and cash management approach.

Awards and Accomplishments

- Chorus – Our school had more students selected for all county chorus than any other FCPS school.
- Band – After school band continues and has expanded to twice per week. Contingent on funding and logistical considerations, we would like to expand this program and bring it into the regular school day as an option.
- Engineering and Technology Club – Our school has 12 robotics teams and 23% of our student population participated in this extracurricular activity. We have the most teams per school of any school in Maryland. Two of First Lego League teams won Core Values awards, and all six of our Junior Lego League teams won awards for their Lego creations related to the theme of improving education.

- Martin Luther King Celebration – Our school was one of only four schools selected to perform in this celebration, and the only choral group that featured a student pianist. An FCCS student was recognized as the MLK award recipient and another student was recognized for her essay, one of only two middle school students recognized in the category.
- Spelling Club -- FCCS held its first annual spelling bee on January 9, 2015 at Hood College Rosenstock Auditorium as part of the National Scripps Spelling Bee program. For several months, FCCS students prepared for the bee in Spelling Bee Club sponsored by Mr. Hanna. They enjoyed learning new words, exploring vocabulary, and playing word games. The Spelling Bee Club meets year round and is open to 4th to 8th graders. The winner of the 2015 FCCS Bee was Miss Rabia Lee (7th grade) and the runner up was Miss Zoe Magnus (5th grade). Miss Lee will be representing FCCS at the Frederick County Spelling Bee on March 14 at the Jack B. Kussmaul (JBK) Theatre at Frederick Community College. Twenty-four students participate in this club.
- MathCounts -- Per our charter application, our students are participating in MathCounts, led by Mr. Nick Diaz.
- Challenge 24 Club -- The Challenge 24 Club has 11 students from grades 5-7 signed up and participating twice per month. The students did not participate in any competitions unless they are subsequently participating in Math Counts with Mr. Diaz. The focus of the club is to give students the opportunity to practice their mental math skills while playing a fun and engaging game with their peers. The students are becoming very skilled at finding patterns and manipulating the numbers to make 24 in rather quick time.
- American Sign Language Club -- This club began this year and approximately 20 students participate.
- Grants – We received a total of \$609,300 in grants.
 - MSDE - 2013 - \$600,000 approved for professional development, legal/insurance curriculum purchase, and start-up expenses.
 - Target - 2013 -- \$1,000 for unrestricted use
 - Wal-mart - 2013 - \$500 approved for physical education equipment
 - Northrup Grumman - 2014 - \$300 approved for STEM Legos Robotics Club
 - Bechtel -2013 -- \$1,000 to start the Lego robotics club
 - Dollar General - 2014 - \$3,000 for library books
 - Target - 2014 - \$2000 for reading programs
 - Classics for Kids - 2014 - \$2000 matching grant for musical instruments
 - FCPS Gifts for Education - 2014 - \$500 for ASL club

Challenges and Future Plans

- The biggest internal challenge the Board is facing is ensuring that our parents, students, and staff fully understand classical education and the logistics and legalities of running a charter school. Our goal over the next several years is to build the capacity of our organization so that the original vision and mission of the school is better understood and implemented. It is important to build this knowledge and skills prior to the expiration of the first term of the founding Board of Trustees, so that the future Board can continue the work that has begun. Though (as expected) our first year was very challenging, we succeeded in spite of these challenges. In our second year, our new Head of School has made enormous progress in just a few months, moving our school back toward our original vision and creating palpable shift in school climate that has been widely noticed both within and outside our school community.

- We are currently exploring the possibility of expanding to the high school grades, starting by enrolling next year’s eighth graders and adding a single grade each year. If the Board of Education approves our expansion, our school will be the first K-12 charter school in the state.

Charter School Renewal Rubric

Per Dr. Harris’ recommendation, we have presented our results in the categories and format used during the charter school renewal process to assist the Board of Education in tracking our progress.

1. EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE				
Focus Area	Indicator	Standard/Criteria	Sources of Evidence	Evidence
Federal Accountability	AYP School Improvement status	The school has not been identified for School Improvement	MSDE AYP Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our school has not been identified for school improvement.
	AYP attainment	The school has achieved its AYP target		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since it was our first year, no AYP target had been set at the time of testing.
	Sub-group(s) attainment of AYP	The school has achieved its AYP targets in identified student sub-group(s)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since it was our first year, no AYP target had been set at the time of testing.
State & Local Accountability	MSA achievement	Students at the school demonstrate proficiency or progress towards meeting proficiency, in subjects tested (mathematics and reading, and science)	MSA data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCCS students scored at or above the county and state averages in all MSA subjects in each grade level.
	Annual gains of students achieving in the bottom 25%	50% make one-year’s worth of growth	MSA data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since it was our first year, year-over-year comparative data is not available.
	% of students tested	The school is appropriately administering applicable state standardized tests to its students.	MSA participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98.2% of students were tested • No testing administration issues were cited.
	Relative performance	The school’s performance meets or exceeds the performance of schools with closely comparable student populations.	MSA data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the MSDE web site¹, closely comparable student populations were not available within Frederick County or the State of Maryland. No results were returned when the query was run to attempt to generate this data.
	Comparative performance			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For elementary reading, FCCS was listed in the top eight schools in Frederick County for performance for FARMS students,² top nine

¹ <http://www.mdk12.org/data/MSA>

² <http://www.mdk12.org/data/MSA/BenchmarkingMostSuccessful.ASPX?Nav=1.2%3a5.3%3a10.10%3a11.1301%3a2.17%3a20.1>

				<p>for special education students, top 13 for Hispanic/Latino students, top 14 for Caucasian students³, and top 16 for African-American students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For elementary math, FCCS was listed as the top performing school for students in special education, the top four for Hispanic/Latino students, the top five for African American students, the top nine schools in Frederick County for FARMS students, the top 10 for Caucasian students.
	Other Charter Agreement Indicators			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIBELS Next reading scores vary by grade level, with improvements in first and sixth grade, little change in second and third grade, and declines in kindergarten, fourth, and fifth grade. Please note that FCCS sets its benchmark standards at the 70th percentile, instead of the 40th percentile used by most other schools. • DIBELS easyCBM math scores vary by grade level, with increases in third grade and fifth grade, little change in kindergarten, fourth grade, and sixth grade, and decreases in first grade and second grade. • Singapore Math tests show overalls gain in all grade levels with decreases in the variance and increases in the average score in all grades. The most dramatic improvement was in first grade. As expected in our first year, though students showed improvement, a significant number of students at all grade levels did not meet the requirement to score 80% or above to be considered having mastered the material at the level that Singapore Math expects. It is important to note that, depending on the topic, Singapore Math can be one to two grade levels ahead of the Common Core standards. • Though history and science exams were given throughout the year, staff did not administer the pre- and post-tests as described in the application, so the Board of Trustees is unable to present data at this time. Our new administration is working on ensuring these tests are given this school year.

³ <http://www.mdk12.org/data/MSA/BenchmarkingMostSuccessful.ASPX?Nav=1.2%3a5.3%3a10.10%3a11.1301%3a2.17%3a20.1>

<p>Mission-Specific Accountability</p>	<p>Achievement of school/mission specific goals</p>	<p>The school is achieving, or making significant progress towards achieving, the school/mission-specific goals as defined in the school's contract.</p>	<p>As defined in the school's contract</p>	<p><i>The following items were listed in section D, Student Outcomes, in our application.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A parent satisfaction survey was issued. The results are included with this packet, and are mixed, depending on the topic. Please note this survey was issued prior to our change to a new administrator. ● The school improvement committee has been active and is run by our staff leadership team. ● Parent education continues through the Academic Committee. Board of Trustees members, staff, and outside experts have presented at the school. Dr. Carol Tolman has presented on reading instruction, Board members Tom Neumark and Larry Kaiser have presented on classical education, staff member Marianne Black has presented on classical education, and Kelly Beins has presented on sensory integration issues. ● The Volunteer Committee works daily in the school and has logged over 10,000 hours of volunteering with 130 different volunteers. ● The Summer Institute and In-Service Training have been occurring in accordance with the schedule in our submitted and approved budget. Training in classical education, myths of teaching and learning, Singapore Math, and scientifically based reading research have been delivered and are continuing. In addition, staff have taken it upon themselves to visit the Covenant Christian Academy in Pennsylvania (a school with a similar curriculum to ours) and develop collaborative relationships with those teachers. Staff have also planned a visit to the Great Hearts Academy in Arizona to occur later this year. ● The school's monthly financial reports are published on the school's web site. A line item budget is available upon request. ● The school has not yet published inspections of its building on its web site, but is in the process of doing so. All inspections by the county have been passed though records are only available through the county at this time.
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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our staff's resumes have been posted on the school web site. • Lesson plans are not currently available for parents to view. Though it is a part of our charter application, the Board understands that there is some resistance to doing this among some of our staff, and that there is some discussion about whether requiring this is possible under the current collective bargaining agreement. • Student progress on reading assessments is available three times a year, and on a more frequent basis for struggling readers. • The Board has begun to record its monthly meetings this year and the communications committee is working on publishing them to the school's web site. The committee meetings have not yet begun to be recorded. All Board minutes have been posted since the school has opened, and are also available in hard copy in the front office. • Despite the Board's wishes, differentiation was actively discouraged in the first half of our first year. Teachers began increasing differentiation in the latter half of last year, and it has begun in earnest this year under our new administration, and will expand further next year with our planned increase in staffing levels. • Despite a lack of support from the administration in the first year, we started a Board-led after school club, the Engineering and Technology Club. We also offered Chorus, which was considered part of the academic program but ran before and after school. We also were able to start MathCounts, which is required by our charter, despite opposition from the administration. This year, the school has continued the Engineering and Technology, MathCounts, and Chorus, and added a Spelling Club, American Sign Language Club, Challenge 24 Club, and will add a Karate Club once our new multi-purpose room is available.
Educational Program	Implementation of the mission	The school is implementing its mission as defined in the school's contract.	MSA, SAT 10, internally developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is implementing the classical approach to education as described in the

Implementation			assessments, onsite evaluation	<p>application. We followed the rigorous interview process described in our application in our first year. In our second year, we followed the same process but were not given access to the teachers' transcripts, so were not in a position to evaluate their verbal scores, which is one of two measurable factors that most highly correlate with effective teaching. However, despite that challenge in our second year, we do believe our selection process resulted in us selecting the top 15-30% of candidates, as our application stated as the goal. Though only two members of our staff had previous experience in a classical school, we believe our rigorous selection process was largely successful in identifying teachers who would thrive in a classical environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The school has yet to use the GE Work Out process in problem solving. We anticipate needing to provide in person training (as opposed to reading material) in this methodology for this part of our vision to be realized. ● Our budget has not yet supported the hiring of four instructional assistants. We currently have one instructional assistant who floats between classes as needed. ● We have not been successful in hiring part time custodial help at the 0.25 FTE level, and have used short term contracts to provide assistance to our full time custodian. Based on FCPS' assessment, a full time custodian should be able to clean the building.
	Implementation of curriculum and instructional techniques	The school is successfully implementing curriculum and instructional techniques as defined in the school's contract.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff have made great progress in learning and implementing the instructional techniques commonly used in classical education, such as direct instruction, scientifically-based reading instruction, chants and rhymes, and Socratic dialogue. The areas that have not received as much attention are memory work and integrating subject areas. Our current Head of School is aware of this and is working to address it.

	<p>Implementation of specialized instruction for students, particularly of those below grade level</p>	<p>The school implements demonstrably effective instructional techniques that support struggling students achieve grade level.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The school's reading specialist and special education staff have implemented pull out and other programs to help struggling students. ● In our first year, the school implemented help sessions as a part of the regular school day. This was discontinued in our second year since research does not support the use of a single help session per subject per week for remedial purposes. This time was put back into the schedule for regular instruction. ● The Academic Committee is currently working on establishing after school and weekend tutoring, a best practice that is used by the Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation's successful network of Maryland charter schools.
	<p>Data-driven decision making</p>	<p>The school competently uses qualitative and quantitative data to inform and guide instructional planning and practice aligned with Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The emphasis on data driven instruction was not implemented to the degree the Board of Trustees wanted in the first year. Some staff simply did not realize the expectations that were stated in the charter in terms of administering the reading and math tests prior to instruction and placing students accordingly, and in some cases staff members actively worked against the mission and vision of the school with regard to data-driven instruction. Science and history pre- and post- test data was never collected or presented to the Board. As a result of not pre-testing, in math students were placed too high within the Singapore Math series, causing a great deal of frustration for some students. Both the Board of Trustees and our Singapore Math consultant had informed both the Head of School and math chair that students who lacked a Singapore Math would likely be at least a half a semester to a year behind and would need to be placed accordingly, but since the Board has no direct authority over the staff, this direction was not followed. ● This year with our new Head of School there is a much greater emphasis on using data in the manner the Board envisioned.

	Implementation of exceptional education programs	The school provides quality services for exceptional students as defined in the school's contract and as required by applicable law.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In our first year, our encouragement of differentiation was actively discouraged by our Head of School, despite our teachers very much supporting it. Our current Head of School has been working with our staff to fulfill our vision for accelerated learners.
	Implementation of ELL program	The school provides quality services for English Language Learner students as defined in the school's contract and as required by applicable law.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This service is provided by FCPS, using the ELL materials we have identified in our application as the primary instructional material.

**Adapted from National Association of Charter School Authorizers*

2. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE				
Focus Area	Indicator	Standard	Sources of Evidence	
Financial Management	Demonstration of professional competence and sound systems in managing the schools financial operations	The school implements an effective system of internal controls over revenues, expenses, and fixed assets, and exercises good business practices.	Annual budgets, financial reports, annual financial audits, financial corrective action plans, onsite evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FCCS successfully completed its annual audit conducted by T.R. Klein; the results were presented to FCPS and to our parent community.
	Adherence to generally accepted accounting principles	The school adheres to generally accepted accounting principles		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per our audit results, FCCS adheres to GAAP procedures and practices.
	Financial Reporting Requirements	The school submits timely and accurate financial information adhering to its financial reporting requirements as defined in the school's contract.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per our contract, FCCS has begun posting our monthly financial information on our web site, and makes a line item budget available upon request, subject to considerations about employee privacy. FCCS conducts check runs every Thursday and Financial Committee meetings on at least a monthly basis. In keeping with our contractual commitment to be transparent in our operations, FCCS has invited anyone with concerns about our financial procedures to attend the committee meetings and/or witness the check runs. Our audit was not completed by the September 15th deadline. It was

				<p>completed in December. There were a number of contributing factors, including that we now receive direct disbursement of funds, which requires a different kind of audit; that this was our first audit; that the FCCS's transition to a new Treasurer resulted in our request for an extension not being made in a timely fashion; and that the schedules and priorities of the auditor, FCCS, and FCPS to get the required information were at times not in sync. Though we hope the audit will be able to be completed earlier next year, FCCS plans to request a deadline of November 15 for next year's audit, in keeping with the requirement for Baltimore City's charter schools.</p>
Financial Viability	Budgeting	The school maintains balanced budgets and a positive cash flow.	Annual financial reports, annual audits, onsite evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our school had \$200,000 in unspent funds at the end of the school year. Nearly all of this money (\$180,000) will be spend on the facility expansion. All budgets submitted to FCPS have projected a positive cash flow.
	Financial obligations	The school's financial obligations are in good standing.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FCCS currently has no debt and has paid its annual rent and all other bills in a timely fashion.
	Long-term financial performance	The school has a sound and sustainable long term financial plan.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FCCS projects financial solvency through the first term of the charter with no increases in per pupil funding for all four years. In the second term of the charter, per pupil funding will need to increase to at least reflect the annual increases in salaries and rent so that the school can continue to be financially viable.
3. ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE				
Focus Area	Indicator	Standard	Sources of Evidence	
Student Enrollment and Conduct	Student enrollment trends	The school's actual enrollment is consistent with its projections.	Student enrollment reports, onsite evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrollment last year (at the end of the school year) was 98.6% of full capacity (276/280) Enrollment this year at the time of the

				<p>writing is 98.4% (315/320). This year, most of the undercount has to do with a personnel issue that resulted in spots not being offered in a timely fashion.</p>
	Racial/ethnic composition of the student body	The racial/ethnic composition of the school's student body is reflective of the community it serves or other public schools in Frederick County.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FCCS student population is representative of the overall student population in the public schools. We have slightly higher percentages of African-American (+1.9%), Asian (+0.43%), two or more races (+0.3%), and Caucasian students (+2.5%), and lower percentage of Hispanic/Latino students (-5.31%).
	Enrollment procedures	The school implements enrollment procedures as defined in the school's contract and in compliance with applicable law.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FCCS has implemented the enrollment procedures as required by FCPS. To speed the enrollment process and to free staff to focus on other tasks, we plan to request permission to assume responsibility for enrollment next year.
	School environment	The school maintains a safe and secure environment.	Discipline reporting; onsite evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To date for the 2014-2015 school year, there have been no in-school or out-of-school suspensions. All disciplinary matters have been nonviolent offenses. Discipline information from the 2013-2014 school year was unable to be located in files left from the previous administration.
	Health and safety	The school complies with applicable health and safety laws.	Fire and health inspections, fire drill reports, evacuation plans, onsite evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite some early missteps by last year's administration, all drills and plans were completed by the end of the year by our substitute administrators. To date, all drills have been conducted as scheduled for the 2014-2015 school year.
Facilities	Facility compliance	The school's facilities comply with applicable laws and codes.	Occupancy permits, health, safety and fire reports, onsite evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FCCS obtained all necessary permits for both its original facility and its expanded facility that is currently under construction. All safety and fire reports have been completed. FCCS took the proactive step of calling the fire marshal about

				its concerns with fire drills not being completed last year and also asked for an inspection of the facilities. All identified issues were addressed.
Governance, Staff and Parents	Governance structure	The school implements the governance structure as defined in the school's contract.	Governing board meeting agendas and minutes, onsite evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The governance structure as described in the application remains in place.
	Compliance with Maryland and federal laws	The school complies with relevant Maryland and federal laws.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FCCS has complied with all federal laws, including the management of its federal startup grant, which was audited and approved.
	Qualifications of instructional staff	The school employs instructional staff that meet Maryland state and federal qualifications	Staffing reports, onsite evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FCCS staff have met all legal requirements for employment and all recommended hires were approved by the FCPS HR department and Board of Education.
	Parental Involvement	The school is effectively involving parents in its programs as defined in the school's contract.	Onsite evaluation, parental surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% of parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "Parents who want to be involved have many opportunities to do so" 93% of parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "I want to be involved in making the school successful"