



Odyssey Charter School

Nurturing a Lifelong Love of Learning

Greetings, Odyssey Community—

At their July Board meeting, the State Board of Education (SBE) placed Odyssey on probation through June 2020. The Board and school leadership understand the importance of transparency and will communicate frequently over coming months regarding the process moving forward. We encourage you to attend upcoming town halls and committee meetings to participate in the conversations.

I had the opportunity to address the SBE at their meeting, and those remarks are shared below. In addition, OCS Board President Joe Wolcott spoke on behalf of the OCS Board, and his comments follow. Odyssey is committed to working in collaboration with DOE to successfully navigate the probationary period.

Thank you for being #OCSSstrong and for your ongoing support of Odyssey.

Yours in education,

Denise Parks

Head of School

Comments from Denise Parks, Odyssey Charter Head of School, to Secretary Bunting and the State Board of Education, Friday, July 18, 2019

Members of the State Board of Education and Secretary Bunting, good evening.

I truly believe education is the most important work we can leave behind. I love teaching, and I always felt compelled to teach. As Head of School at Odyssey, I see this same passion and commitment from our incredible staff and leadership team, all of them.

Odyssey has built an outstanding environment and culture for our students, staff, and families. When we speak of the “Odyssey way,” those on the ground know what it means to be part of the Odyssey family.

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The Odyssey way is unfettering dedication to excellence for all students, inclusiveness and warmth, and a relentless focus on improvement for our students and ourselves.

This culture is not created by one person or even one group. It is the collective efforts of everyone at Odyssey that create the kind of environment I describe. In my vantage point as Head of School, I witness this across our many constituents.

The dedication of the OCS Board, both past and present, has been instrumental to our success. On behalf of the school leadership team, we appreciate the support and trust the Board has provided as the school has grown and evolved. I have also seen the good work that AHEPA has done for the school over the years and value their contributions to Odyssey. The passionate volunteerism provided by the Board and AHEPA is truly appreciated.

I see this same passion in our faculty and staff. Every school day, I am fortunate to witness the genuine care and commitment they provide to Odyssey students. I may be biased, but I assure you that Odyssey has the best faculty and staff in Delaware and beyond. But don't take my word for it, this is an invitation to see us in action next school year. The door is always open.

I'm here today to share that the passion and commitment that is woven into the fabric of Odyssey will continue on after today's decision. Conflict, when joined with constructive conversation, can lead to innovation. And it is innovation that will lift our school to further success. We are committed to a new spirit of unity, a unity that will make a positive impact on solving the challenges we face.

We all want our school to not just to survive but thrive.

This entire process has made it very evident - regardless of where we stand on the issues, that everyone truly loves our school. We all share the common goal of wanting to see our school and 1800 students succeed.



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OCS Strong is how we see ourselves. I have absolute faith in our school and believe together with DOE, will continue to grow and enrich the lives of thousands of students.

I will part with this thought, one that I believe and that our school will prove: Odyssey's best years are ahead of us. Thank you.

Comments from Joe Wolcott, Odyssey Charter School Board President to Secretary Bunting and the State Board of Education, Friday, July 18, 2019

Thank you, Secretary Bunting and the board for providing this opportunity to address you tonight.

This has been a challenging journey for the OCS community. These past months have left many of our board members, teachers and parents asking the hard questions about the path forward for the school.

As Board President, I am committed to ensure we come together as a 'house united.' (*Lincoln*) We want to send a strong, clear message to all our OCS community and give you reassurance that there is a united voice as we move forward into the future. The lessons learned will help guide us on that path.

We love our school and our Greek program and, as Denise said earlier, we all share the common goal of wanting to see our school and its 1800 students succeed.

We know we are stronger when we incorporate multiple perspectives into our work as a board and we will continue to make the necessary changes to be more transparent and when possible to be more inclusive of the multiple viewpoints that make up our OCS community.

We have truly **listened** to our teachers, parents and volunteers. We would not have a successful school without them.



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The board understands that our governance practices need strengthening – and we must adjust to what the OCS school community needs today.

To do so:

- The board has approved the formation of a Compliance Committee, which will analyze tonight’s decision, make recommendations to the Board and collaborate with the DOE. We have our first meeting scheduled for July 25, 2019.
- The board has also approved plans to create a committee to evaluate mechanisms such as Foundation models that will help us and the DOE better separate the public and non-public funds.

The board is grateful to Denise as Head of School and Riccardo as Campus Operations Officer, for keeping the trains running on time, and all lines of communication open as we navigate this Formal Review together.

Secretary Bunting, I think it is clear that this process has made it very evident that regardless of where we stand on the issues, *everyone* truly loves our school. We are also clear about what makes OCS distinctive and successful – our unique partnership with the DOE and the school’s founders.

Odyssey, born of Greek values, is a wonderful school beloved by all and we are moving forward together.

We are grateful to you for helping and advising us throughout our continued growth. The board is energized by the idea of working together to harness new ideas and practices to unite, heal, and strengthen our OCS community.