

ABSTRACT

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Freire Charter School Wilmington is a recently approved charter high school (grades 8-12), which will ultimately serve 560 students from some of the neediest neighborhoods in and around Wilmington, Delaware beginning in the 2015-2016 school year. Our mission is to provide a college-preparatory learning experience with a focus on individual freedom, critical thinking, and problem solving in an environment that emphasizes the values of community, teamwork, and nonviolence. Replicating our successful high school program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Freire Charter School Wilmington is aligned with the goal of the Charter Schools Program to support the creation and development of high quality charter schools. As such, we are seeking this grant to support the planning, program design, and implementation of our high quality charter school over the next 36 months.

Freire Charter School Wilmington's educational program is modeled on our successful Philadelphia school, with key elements duplicated and customized to meet the needs of underserved teens in Wilmington, while allowing for innovation and modification based on Wilmington students' unique needs. We know from our experience in Philadelphia, the average student enters Freire several years behind in reading and math, but by the end of their first year, 86% of those students will catch up. Our paramount goal is to help these students learn, achieve, and transform their senses of themselves and of their futures—to raise their expectations about what they can be, in school and beyond. We do this through an instructional design consisting of (1) instruction that is focused, efficient, and active; (2) academic support structures and programs incorporated into every part of the school day; (2) emotional support and structures that serve the whole child; (4) effective use of data taken from a variety of sources; (5) regard for teachers as professionals empowered to create rigorous Common Core aligned instruction; (6) classroom practices and organization to facilitate learning and safety; (7) technology used as a learning tool.

While the economic and social challenges facing Wilmington are serious, we believe that Freire Charter School Wilmington will offer hope to parents and families seeking a free, high-quality, public education within their community. We have set high (but attainable) goals for our students in the areas of student progress over time, student achievement, and post-secondary readiness. As we work to meet these goals, we anticipate successes similar to those experienced at our Philadelphia school, where on average, 88 percent of our alumni enroll in college within two years of high school graduation, and approximately 89 percent of those students return for their sophomore year, according to the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). Therefore, Freire Charter School Wilmington will be a truly college preparatory educational program for a population of students who do not yet know that such a future is attainable.