



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE OF DELAWARE
LEGISLATIVE HALL
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901**

The following letter was delivered to the Dept. of Education offices on September 18, 2009...

Dr. Lillian M. Lowery, EdD
Secretary of Education
Townsend Building
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901

Dr. Lowery,

I'm writing to urge you and the State Board of Education to find in favor of the Odyssey Charter School in its appeal to be granted use of the Darley Road Elementary School property idled by the Brandywine School District.

The Odyssey Charter School has distinguished itself as one of our state's more innovative public schools for kindergarten to fifth grade students. In fact, your department cited Odyssey as a "Superior School" in 2008.

Parents in northern New Castle County have also taken note of the school's accomplishments. Odyssey has grown from its original charter of 300 pupils and has a current enrollment of 390 students. Next year, it's anticipated Odyssey will reach capacity at 480 students. Even then, the school is expected to have a waiting list of approximately 150 children.

As we continue our efforts to improve public education, I believe the DOE and the Board should do everything in their power to help successful schools build on their achievements.

As you are aware, the majority of the costs to build and maintain Delaware's school facilities are paid for by the state. Under state law, a public school like Odyssey Charter has priority for the use of a vacated, publicly-financed building. While the Boys & Girls Club – to which the Brandywine School District has awarded use of the Darley Road property – is a good organization, it does not have Odyssey's standing under the Delaware Code.

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Additionally, I would argue that complying with this law provides more value for local residents and taxpayers. As a long-term tenant, Odyssey Charter School would maximize use of the Darley Road site, making it a more attractive and vibrant member of the community.

Just as importantly, during talks with Brandywine School District officials earlier this year, Odyssey was negotiating to pay the district a lease payment of \$50,000 to \$200,000 annually. Assuming a mid-point of \$125,000 per year, Odyssey would provide the district with a value of \$2.5 million over the course of a 20-year lease – money that could be used to reduce the need for referendums and continue academic improvement programs proposed by your agency. The Boys & Girls Club can offer no such comparable benefit.

This is not to suggest that upholding Odyssey Charter's appeal would shut out the Boys & Girls Club from the Darley Road property. On the contrary, Odyssey officials have repeatedly said they would welcome the club to operate before and after school programs at the facility.

In summary, I urge you to find in favor of Odyssey Charter School. Allowing them use of the Darley Road property – as per state law – will expand a successful public school program, provide local taxpayers with an additional \$2.5 million to improve area schools, and still provide a home for the Boys & Girls Club to stage their helpful activities.

This is a rare instance where the law, logic, and serendipity coincide. In the best interests of our public education system, our taxpayers, and the local community, I urge you and the board to find in favor of the Odyssey Charter School.

Best regards,



State Rep. Nick Manolakos



State Rep. Deborah Hudson



State Rep. Joseph Miro



State Rep. Thomas Kovach

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State Rep. Greg Lavelle

cc: Dr. Teri Quinn Gray
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