

**DELAWARE CHARTER SCHOOL  
ANNUAL REPORT**



**Early College High School @  
Delaware State University**

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Board President

## **I. Charter School Program**

### **Narrative:**

*Provide a Synopsis of the School's Mission and Educational Program, Including Key Components of the Education Model and Any Unique or Innovative Features of the School*  
*Discuss Key Accomplishments of the Charter School Program Over the 2016-17 School Year*

### **Mission**

The mission of Early College High School at Delaware State University is to provide highly motivated students with a curriculum that is integrated with the relevant curriculum at Delaware State University such that all students graduate with one to two years of college credits and are in a favorable position to graduate from college. The school shall provide a safe, caring and nurturing environment that develops students' academic, social skills and personal character traits necessary for successful college completion, with a special focus on high school students who will be the first generation in their families to become college educated.

### **Vision**

The vision of Early College High School at Delaware State University will be a nationally recognized early college, which increases access to higher education and produces students who have the expectations and skills to make a significant impact in the global community.

### **Educational Program:**

In partnership with Delaware State University (DSU), a Historically Black College and University in Dover, Delaware, the Early College High School at Delaware State University (ECHS@DSU) was designed to be a dynamic high school where students will be engaged,

motivated, and supported by the unique learning environment that is created by the early college high school model. The school replicates the nationally recognized early college high school model and seeks to serve particularly first generation college attendees in grades 9-12. To meet these academic and cultural goals, the Board of Directors (Board) of the Early College High School at Delaware State University has selected Knowledge Works (formerly EdWorks) as a partner and will use their early college model design. In the tradition of early college high schools across the nation, students at ECHS@DSU will have the opportunity to earn a high school diploma *and* up to 60 hours of college credit during their four-year high school career, and will develop the drive and focus necessary to succeed at all levels of education and in their chosen careers.

Innovation, curiosity, and intellectual risk-taking are at the heart of ECHS@DSU, and each of these concepts align with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that students will need as future leaders in their professions. The early college high school model sees mastery of core subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> century themes as essential to ensuring that all students are able to thrive in a complex, connected world.

**Key Accomplishments:**

- As of the end of the 2016-17 school year, ECHS students have earned 3,588 college credits
- Increased demand for the school resulted in the need for a lottery
- Students had a different “Summer Bridge” Program than in recent years
  - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade: One-Week Orientation
  - 10<sup>th</sup> Grade: Online ELA and Math Skill-Building with Edmentum’s Study

Island

- 11<sup>th</sup> Grade: Summer Reading Project with a historical base
- 12<sup>th</sup> Grade: 15 Hours in their field of study (Volunteer, Research,

Internship) for their

#### Capstone Projects

- Won the Bronze Service Leadership award through the Jefferson Awards
- Boys and Girls Soccer was added to the athletic teams
- In its inaugural year, Business Professionals of America students won at the state level and competed at the Nationals in May.

## **II. Performance Reflection**

Please Complete the Questions that Match the Charter School’s Performance Tier.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
“Meets Standard” overall ratings on all of the following: - 2015-16 and 2016-17 Org Frameworks - 2015-16 and 2016-17 Financial Frameworks - 2016-17 Academic Frameworks	“Meets Standard” overall Ratings on one or more Performance Framework reports during 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years OR Opened in 2016-17 School Year, Never on Formal Review	At any point during 2016-17 school year: - Renewed with Conditions - Placed on Formal Review - Earned “Falls Far Below Standard” on any Framework Report

**Tier 3 Narrative:**

Academic Performance

*Identify areas or factors where the school has met standard in academic performance.*

“See Renewal Application” and include the page number

ECHS@DSU did not have State assessment data for SY2014-15 or SY2015-16 because there were no students in any tested grade levels during the first two years of operation. In SY2014-15, ECHS@DSU opened with ninth grade and added a new grade each year thereafter, and currently serves grades 9-11. This school year, SY2016-17, was the first year that State results will be available since this is the first year the school had eleventh grade students.

Although there is no state-reported data from 2014-2016, ECHS@DSU does have several measures that have been used to guide academic growth: PSAT scores, College Readiness data, and students enrolled in college courses.

PSAT Scores have served as a benchmark for students and have helped to institute changes for academics. In 2015-16, the then freshmen did poorly on the PSAT 8/9 Reading (44%), while the then sophomores scored 83%. Both grade levels scored well-below the mark when taking the PSAT 8/9 Math and PSAT Math.

2015-16		2016-17	
Class of 2019 PSAT 8/9 Math	39%	Class of 2019 PSAT 10 Math	30%
Class of 2019 PSAT Reading 8/9	44%	Class of 2019 PSAT 10 Reading	66%
Class of 2018 PSAT 10 Math	26%	Class of 2018 SAT 11 Math	23%
Class of 2018 PSAT 10 Reading	83%	Class of 2018 SAT 11 ERW	61%

The 2016-17 student performance on PSAT and SAT was similar with the juniors scoring 61% proficiency in English Writing and Reading (ERW) on the SAT, and the sophomores scoring 66% proficiency on the PSAT. In math, the scores were both below proficiency with 23% on SAT and 30% on the PSAT.

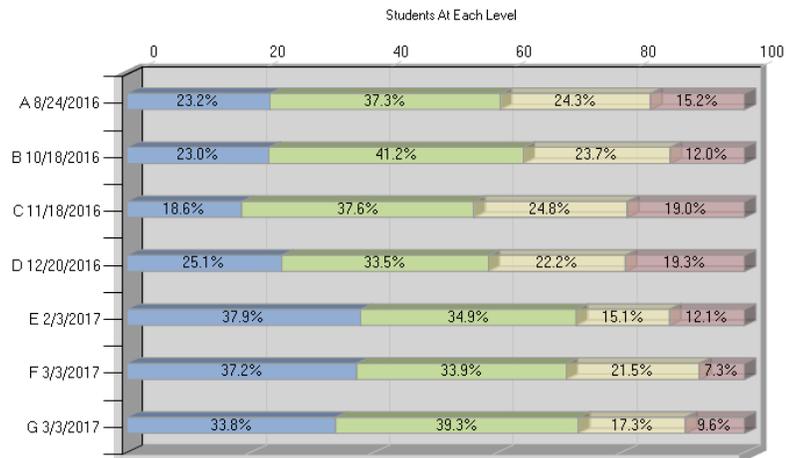
Because of the results, in 2016-17, students took SAT Prep Math with an ECHS math teacher in their sophomore year and the online Khan Academy SAT Prep in both math and reading in their junior year to reinforce math and reading skills.

To expand this further, in the 2017-18 school year, students in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades will be “double-dosed” in math, taking a course each semester for both school years. ECHS is on a block schedule, allowing students to earn more than one credit of math in a year, thus allowing the students to obtain four semesters of high school math before taking college math in their junior year.

In addition to the PSAT and SAT, ECHS students are measured by their college readiness through the use of the *ECHS College Readiness Rubric* developed by the school leader. The students are scored in the categories of grades, attendance, behavior, academic assessments, and teacher recommendations during each of the eight grade reporting periods. With the help of Performance PLUS at the DOE, the *ECHS College Readiness Rubric* is electronic, and the

scoring reports are given to students each time they receive their grade reporting (interims and report cards).

Data from the 2016-17 school year shows an increase in college readiness proficiency from the first marking period interim to the fourth marking period interim. Blue in the table below indicates students who scored 18-20 on the College Readiness Rubric out of a possible score of 20. Green indicates students who scored 15-17, yellow indicates students who scored 10-14, and red indicates students who scored 5-9. Students in the Blue and green were considered “college ready”: increasing throughout the year from 60.5% in the first marking interim to 73.1% being college ready.



Once students made the mark of being college ready in a pattern of two or more semesters shown by scores on the College Readiness Rubric, students were permitted to take college courses at Delaware State University.

Although the DSSF has “not rated” indicator for the College and Career Preparation category due to ECHS not having any graduates yet, the table below indicates the number of college

credits earned by the ECHS students from the first through the third year of the school. A total of 3,588 credits have been earned in the first three years, all by students under the age of 18.

<b>ECHS College Earned College Credits</b>									
Grade	Student Cohort N	Fall/Spring 2014-15	Summer Bridge 2015	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Summer Bridge 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Total College Credits
9	118					255		72	327
10	91		186		42	481	66	153	928
11	73	259	119	108	171	503	581	592	2333
Totals	282								3,588

In 2016-17, ECHS hired a third math teacher and continued in the Integrated Math I, II, and III courses. There were multiple failures and students had to repeat the courses. This did not translate into success in College Algebra and other math courses, as 23 students did not pass.

The overall DCAS Science (Biology) data from 2016-17 was below average. Only four students out of 72 scored a 4 (Distinguished), 19 scored a 3 (Proficient), 19 students scored a 2 (Below Average), and 30 students scored a 1 (Well-Below Average). Percentages were as follows:

Rating	No Students	Percentage
4	4	5%
3	19	26%
2	19	26%
1	30	42%

ECHS has a semester block schedule with students taking courses for 90 minutes for one semester. Some of the students took biology during the first semester and the retention of the information may not have been good for them.

Looking ahead, ECHS has put plans in place and expects to have better outcomes in all of the subjects during the 2017-18 school year. The following plans are in place:

- For ELA, all teachers in all curricular areas will implement reading, writing, listening, and speaking strategies aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The teachers will have a Peer Visit system that has been developed as a result of a State Reimagining Grant.
- For Mathematics, a fourth math teacher was hired so that all ninth and tenth graders could take two math courses per year for two years, allowing students to earn four years' worth of high school math credit before they take a college course.
- For Science, the students will take Biology during the first semester and a science elective course that has Biology review imbedded in the curriculum to assist with students retaining the content.

ECHS will measure students' success in several ways. During PLC each Tuesday, teachers will look at student work to determine which students seem to be struggling in their course work and on classroom-level assessments. Also, on Mondays, the staff meets in grade-level meetings to discuss students across curricular areas to see what supports need to be put in place and what strategies seem to be working for the student. Finally, ECHS teachers will use the ECHS College Readiness data and grade reporting data to determine student mastery.

## Organizational Performance

During the first two years of existence, ECHS met the overall standard in Organizational Management. During the 2016-17 school year, the school has slipped to “Approaching the standard” for a couple of reasons. First, ECHS only met one of the two measures for the Mission Specific goal, missing one by 4%. Second, during an audit of Special Education services, ECHS had to create a corrective action plan for documentation. Finally, in the area of Governance and Public Stewardship, some of the ECHS Board meeting minutes were not posted in a timely fashion and not all of the Board members had completed required trainings. It should be noted, though, that all pending training has been scheduled and will be completed by the end of this month.

In 2014-15, ECHS@DSU met the standard for the Organizational Framework in all except one category: Staff Credentialing. In 2015-16, ECHS@DSU met the standard in all categories of the Organizational Framework. Since then, several things have taken place to continue the rating:

- A Minor Modification was completed and approved to change financial services from Innovative Schools, the CMO, to Neely and Spence Financial Consulting, human resources and payroll from Innovative Schools to Positive Outcomes Charter School.
- The Summer Bridge Program (as mentioned above) will be more of an orientation program being held during the start of the school year, so ECHS will not need to pay extra teacher stipends for an extended summer program.
- A 9th grade academy has been created at the current ECHS building, and the 10th grade students will be moving to the DSU campus creating a learning environment where 9th graders can focus on becoming college ready which will support a smooth transition to the DSU campus. This will also help to improve all areas of the organizational

framework. There will no longer be a need to operate a shuttle bus to transport students back and forth to DSU. This will result in a savings of \$89,000.

The Organizational Performance for ECHS has been progressing. In each of the areas, there are always challenges and opportunities:

#### Educational Program

- *Challenges:* Serving students with disabilities will always be a work in progress for ECHS. As the school grows more and more students with disabilities are enrolling, and as a result, ECHS has had to create a very structured system to ensure that their accommodations are being met in all classes and that the students become college ready within a year.
- *Opportunities:* ECHS has been working very closely with the Delaware Department of Education to ensure that all IEP processes are being followed.

#### Financial Management and Oversight

- *Challenges:* A material weakness noted in the audit was the lack of a formal financials closing process.
- *Opportunities for Growth:* Develop a process for formal financials. For the past year, ECHS has enlisted the guidance of Dorcell Spence from Neeley & Spence, Inc. to ensure that all financial documents have had a forensic look to identify any potential issues and strategies to resolve those issues.

#### Governance and Reporting

- *Challenges:* Ensuring that all new Board members attend trainings and keeping a record

of all Board documents.

- *Opportunities:* With a new position of Recording Secretary, Board documents will be made public on the school's new website as soon as they are voted on at the Board meetings. In addition, the Recording Secretary will log all Board members' training information and work with the Board President to ensure that the training requirements are met.

#### Students' and Employees' Attendance Goal

- *Challenges:* Ensuring that all attendance records are correct for reporting
- *Opportunities for Growth:* A new clerk will be hired to assist with attendance records and managing attendance notes.

#### School Environments

- *Challenges:* ECHS pays more for transportation than any other charter in the state of Delaware due to enrolling students from the entire state.
- *Opportunities:* Working with surrounding districts and other charters to share more of the transportation costs

In an effort to instill a college-going culture earlier in the students' career, ECHS will use its current building as a Freshmen Academy. It will house all incoming freshmen and a team of ninth grade teachers who will work together in team meetings and PLCs to analyze data on the students, identify at-risk students earlier, and to prepare the students to be able to take classes at DSU. The Upperclassmen are housed on the DSU campus, capturing the "Power of Place" in the early college model. While 10<sup>th</sup> grade students are mainly taking high school classes, they travel from building to building to go to their classes like college students.

The final “change” in the educational program is the addition of offering students the opportunity to choose more than just STEM pathways, thus making it STEM+. The ECHS students can now major in 41 of the 42 undergraduate majors that DSU has to offer (The Aviation major is not available due to the age of students). This has incentivized more students to apply to ECHS, improving enrollment.

ECHS had an on-site audit of special education files during the 2016-2017 school year. The audit revealed that ECHS needed to improve the process by which ECHS special education staff conducted self-audits to ensure compliance with record keeping of student files. The ECHS special education director regularly attends the Department of Education special education leadership meetings to stay abreast of current requirements and available trainings/resources available to special education staff.

Throughout the school year, all ECHS staff participate in professional development focused on special education (regulations, identification, and services).

At least quarterly throughout the school year during PLC, the principal, assistant principal, and teachers review and analyze all student (9-12) academic, behavioral, and attendance data to identify students who may be at-risk and need an intervention. A collaborative meeting is scheduled with the student, administration, teacher(s), and school counselor to review the student’s progress or lack thereof and develop an appropriate plan of success. Services may include any of or a combination of the following supports: supplemental instructional support, tutoring, small group sessions, schedule adjustment (if early in the semester), frequent staff check-in and monitoring, and/or mentoring.

Students receive an *ECHS College Readiness* report at each grade reporting period (eight times per year) which provides current information for a student to review and develop appropriate goals regarding attendance, academics, discipline, classroom performance/expectations, and assessments (rated categories on the college readiness rubric). The college readiness reports are used as a tool for the student, parent, and school to holistically measure each student's individual success. All ECHS stakeholders have received detailed information about the college readiness tool and its use via parent meetings and via written communication.

Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, as a universal screener, all ECHS students will take the Study Island ELA and Math benchmark assessment. If a student falls below the grade level benchmark, the student is referred to the Response to Intervention team. The team is comprised of ECHS educators including regular education teacher, special education teachers, school counselor, and an administrator. The student's classroom teachers are invited to attend a collaborative meeting to discuss the student's academic, social, and behavioral performance. The team will develop interventions that can be implemented and monitored within the classroom setting.

ECHS provides a tiered system of supplemental support for students. ECHS has an enrichment/RtI period three times per week, 1 hour per session for grade 9 and 45 minutes per session for grades 10-12.

For the past three years, the School Leader was evaluated using the *School Leadership Rubric*, which was designed by Innovative Schools (CMO). Innovative Schools uses the following language to describe the basis for the rubric: *In high performing charter schools, principals provide leadership to achieve measurable outcomes in five areas: student performance, school*

*design, customer satisfaction, financial management, and operational excellence. The School Leadership Rubric ascribes four key roles to principals to achieve these outcomes: Instructional Leader, Organizational Leader, Culture Builder, and Site Manager. Each role comes with specific job responsibilities that research shows are correlated to increased student achievement.* Effective School Model principals relentlessly pursue an ambitious school vision of high academic achievement and strong character development for all students through the execution of the four leadership roles: Instructional Leader, Organizational Leader, Culture Builder, and Site Manager. The School Leadership Rubric is intended as a professional development tool, to enable principals to place themselves on the continua of the various leadership performance levels and to work with their achievement support team to grow in the professional execution of their responsibilities. The School Leadership Rubric describes the responsibilities and associated job performances for each of the five leadership roles. Each leadership role is organized around top-level performance standards, under which the specific responsibilities associated with that standard, are broken down into a set of criteria for Initial, Developing, Proficient, and Exemplary performance

After the initial goal-setting session from 2014-March 2017, the Chief Academic Officer of Innovative Schools completed quarterly evaluative sessions with the School Leader to check on the progress of said goals. This information was reviewed by the ECHS Board President.

In April 2017, the CMO Chief Academic Officer left the CMO due to other employment, and the task of completing the School Leader evaluation was given to the Chair of the Personnel Committee of the ECHS Board, a retired Delaware School/District Administrator. The remaining quarterly and summative evaluation were completed by that administrator. At the end

of the 2016-17 school year, the Personnel Committee decided that revisions of the evaluation tool were needed to better align it with the mission and goals of the school. ECHS has been asked to participate in a pilot with the Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL) using the new PSEL national standards for school leadership. The current process will remain in place until DASL meets with leadership to discuss and finalize the plans for the pilot.

The ECHS Board of Directors is transitioning from being a Founding Board to a Governing Board. As such, the work of the Board is still very much the work of the school, albeit at a broad level. For example, this year our focus areas are the charter renewal and fundraising. The focus areas involved multiple steps, each with its own timeline for completion. Success is measured in terms of the completion of specific activities. For example, a fundraising luncheon was held in July 2017. Although successful, at the debriefing session we decided that the event should be held earlier in the year and planning should occur over a more sustained period.

The Board President regularly monitors the progress of the Board's effectiveness. Through regular and constant contact with the Board members, issues or concerns are raised. While there has not been a need to implement corrective action, should a need arise to bring a matter involving the Board's effectiveness to the attention of the full board, either a special meeting will be convened to address the same or an agenda item will be added to the Board's agenda. In the event a Board member is unable to fully participate during his/her term, nominations for new board members will be considered.

The Board Membership Committee nominates members to the Board of Directors who have various backgrounds in finance, law, education, and/or business. These professional experiences enable the Board to guide and support the ECHS administration and staff in achieving success and carrying out the school's mission. The Chair of the Membership Committee and the Board

President provide an orientation to new members, explaining the role of the Board, member responsibilities and discussing committee assignments. Members of the Board have participated in several training activities, including training provided by Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement, (“DANA”) annual training provided by the Charter School Network, and topic-specific training provided by DE DOE.

To monitor and minimize any teacher attrition rates mentioned above, the School Leader will provide a “New Teacher Academy” class to be held on Tuesdays after school. This time will allow for more time for professional development, explanation of school procedures, and discussion about upcoming events and teacher evaluation. This will also be a time for new teachers to address concerns or issues or questions they may have with the School Leader. Also, there will be small rewards for the new staff to celebrate their accomplishments as new ECHS teachers.

### Financial Performance

In 2014-15, ECHS@DSU received an overall rating of does not meet the standard on the Financial Performance Framework in the areas of Current Ratio, Days Cash, and Debt to Asset Ratio. In 2015-16, ECHS@DSU did not meet the standard in not only those three areas, but also Enrollment Variance.

#### *Current Ratio and Days Cash*

Summer Earned Salaries were budgeted and set aside for the amount of \$287,790 in FY2017. The DSU liability of \$181,587 has been moved from short-term to a long-term liability. In addition, ECHS@DSU has made early draws on the line of credit as necessary to increase cash balances. These cash management strategies improved the Current Ratio and are expected to

continue to improve the Debt-to-Asset Ratio and Days Cash tests. For example, although the Debt to Asset Ratio does not yet meet the required level, it has improved from 2016 to 2017.

The former Summer Bridge Program involved additional costs not covered by the state and local funding, therefore placing additional pressure on the budget. Additional costs included 11-month salary for all teachers for an estimated additional cost of \$131,437 and bus transportation to the DSU campus for an additional cost of \$30,113. Starting FY2018, the Summer Program will be incorporated within the teacher contract year and housed at the Living & Learning Commons; therefore, resulting in an annual savings of \$161,550.

*Debt to Asset Ratio and Total Margin:*

While the Line of Credit Balance increased from \$500,000 to \$850,004, the incremental change was less than that of Total Assets, therefore improving the intended result for the Debt to Asset Ratio. In addition, the total margin has shown a marked and steady decrease from -38.5% in 2015 to -10.69% in 2016 to -5.99% in 2017.

*Enrollment Variance*

According to Knowledge Works, Inc., the attrition rate of an early college high school is approximately 20-40% (Knowledge Works. Interview: Tom Forbes, Consultant, 2016). With three years of operation, ECHS@DSU has had an enrollment shortfall that has caused some operating pressures. The feedback from student exit interviews has helped to improve the marketing strategies at ECHS. Increased staff and student attendance at state-wide high school fairs, as well as hosting open houses at ECHS have contributed to an improvement in enrollment variance from 103% (FY2015), 93% (FY2016), 89% (FY2017), 99% (FY2018).

### Challenges

- The first year limited enrollment and high start-up costs required the school to draw on a line of credit to meet its cash needs.
- Inability to set aside earned summer pay until FY2017
- Bringing students from across the state made daily school transportation costs higher than the state allotment
- Providing a daily shuttle to transport the students taking college courses from ECHS to DSU
- Five-week Summer Bridge Program versus an initial one-week program
- Purchasing more college textbooks due to increased number of students enrolled in college courses

### Opportunities for Growth

- School enrollment increased due to the addition of grade levels.
- Receipt of a NON SEA grant that provided an additional \$600,000 of revenue through July 2018.
- Proactive management of resources and efficiencies has enabled the maximization of debt with the intent to improve the debt to asset ratio.
- There was no five-week Summer Bridge program in the summer of 2017 nor will there be into the future. Instead, the program was modified to include all four grade levels and incorporated into the regular instructional year.

Based upon the findings of the 2014-15 audit, ECHS developed a corrective action plan through the Board Finance and Facilities Committee and addressed the following:

- Development of a fixed asset policy by December 2015

- Work with the Charter Management Company to ensure that the proper documentation is on-site
- Development of policies and procedures to ensure timely completion of the financial reporting process.

During FY2016 and FY2017, there were no Findings.