

May 12, 2017

Denise Stouffer
Charter School Office
Delaware Department of Education
401 Federal Street
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Mrs. Stouffer:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Charter School Renewal Report for the Early College High School at Delaware State University.

Academic Performance

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, will be the first year that State results will be available since this is the first year the school has eleventh grade students.

Although there is not any state-reported data from 2014-2016, ECHS@DSU does have several measures which 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.

Table 1.

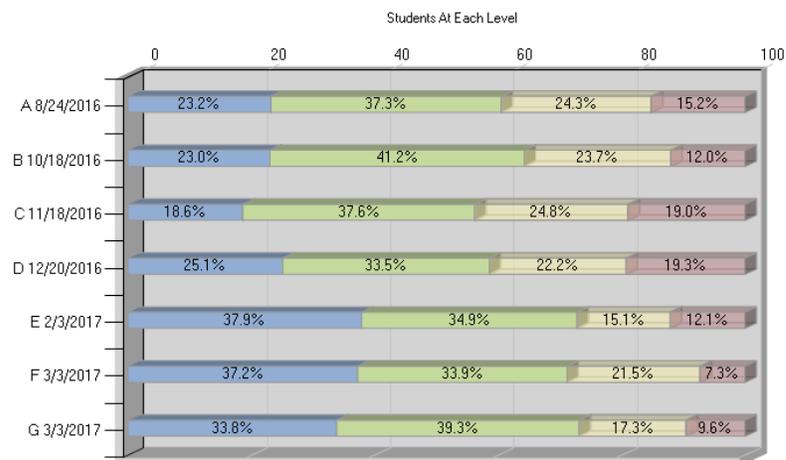
Class of 2019 PSAT 8/9 Math	39%
Class of 2019 PSAT Reading 8/9	44%
Class of 2018 PSAT Math	26%
Class of 2018 PSAT Reading	83%

As a result, students take SAT Prep Math with an ECHS@DSU 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. In addition, in the 2017-18 school year, students in the 9th and 10th grade will be “double-dosed” in math, taking a course each semester for both school years. Since ECHS@DSU 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, ECHS@DSU students are measured by their college readiness through the use of a 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, ECHS@DSU's 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 Fig. 1 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 students who scored 10-14, and red 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.

Fig. 1



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. Table 2 indicates the number of high school and college credits earned by the ECHS@DSU students by January 2017 (Showing the total in three years).

Table 2

Grade	HS Credits	College Credits	Average College Credit per Student	Student Cohort
9	791.5	255	6.7	118
10	1210.5	547	13.2	92
11	1397.5	1084	18.9	74

In the fall of 2015, thirty-two sophomores took at least one college course. By spring of 2016, 70 students (56 sophomores and 14 freshmen) had taken at least one college course. In fall 2016, twenty-three sophomores were taking at least one class and 63 juniors were taking 9-12 credits. During the spring 2017 semester, forty-six sophomores and 24 freshmen took at least one college course, while 70 juniors took 9-12 credits.

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 but also Enrollment Variance.

Current Ratio and Days Cash

Summer Earned Salaries are budgeted and will be set aside for an estimated amount of \$285,434. Accounts Payable will be budgeted and assumed to continue at the FY2016 level of \$65,566 until further projections can be obtained. The DSU liability of \$181,587 will be moved from short-term to a long-term liability. In addition, ECHS@DSU will make early draws on the line of credit as necessary to increase cash balances. These cash management strategies will therefore improve the both the Current Ratio and Days Cash tests.

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

Debt to Asset Ratio:

While the Line of Credit Balance will increase from \$500,000 to an estimated amount of \$849,957, the incremental change is projected to be less than that of Total Assets, therefore improving the intended result for the Debt to Asset Ratio. Neeley and Spence, Inc. will perform pro formas dealing with early draws on the line of credit

Enrollment Variance

According to Knowledge Works, Inc., the attrition rate of an early college high school is approximately 40% (Knowledge Works. Interview: Tom Forbes, Consultant, 2016). With three years of operation, ECHS@DSU has had an enrollment shortfall that has caused operating deficits. To correct this, ECHS@DSU will do the following:

- There will be no Summer Bridge program in 2017. The original intent for Summer Bridge was for 9th and 10th grade students to take a college class and some high school enrichment classes, as well as physical education; however, the five-week program proved to be too rigorous for students just completing the 8th grade only weeks before it. It also was more academic than orientation-like, and so it did not acclimate students to school-live at ECHS the way it was originally intended. In the last two years, more students have decided to leave during the month after Summer Bridge citing the difficulty of the program. The orientation program this year in lieu of Summer Bridge will be more uplifting and educational about the school system and what the students need to know rather than giving them a college class and other high school classes when they are too young to keep up.
- There will be some students who may be retained in a grade so that they will be a part of the attrition for one grade, but the rise in enrollment of another. These students will be on a “high school track” until they reach college-ready status. This will help with the fact that ECHS@DSU cannot back-fill grades 11 and 12 and can only accept 9th and 10th graders.
- There are kick-off recruiting opportunities that have been arranged for the summer 2017: Delaware State Fair, Middletown Peach Festival, and Seaford AFRAM.
- The sophomores will be housed at DSU for next school year with 11th and 12th graders, thus catering to the “Power of Place.”
- Retention Focus 2017-18

- In order to ensure students who enroll fully understand the rigors and expectations of the school, “Hornet Hello” sessions are held before students enroll. This will hopefully help to make sure students/families are a good fit with the school before they start.
- In addition to the Hornet Hello programs, ECHS will continue to use the ECHS College Readiness Rubric, which measures grades, attendance, behavior, and scores on large-scale assessments, as well as teacher recommendations to better assess how well students can perform in college courses, sooner rather than later. This also acts as a gauge of at-risk tendencies so that supports can be put in place to help students be more successful. Students and parents are invited to meetings with the school administration to discuss their progress. At these meetings students/families are able to discuss their concerns with the school as well as their plans to return. If a student is identified as possibly leaving the school the following year we work with the family to ensure this is the best decision for the student.
- Using this process last year and putting other supports (Response to Intervention classes, tutoring, mentoring) in place during the year, helped the ECHS Administration to realize students who may not be a fit. This will continue in 2017-18.

Organizational Framework

In 2014-15, ECHS@DSU met the standard for the Organizational Framework in all except three categories: Financial Management and Oversight, Attendance Goal, and 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, 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 staff year, so ECHS@DSU will not need to pay extra teacher stipends within the salary.
- A 9th grade academy has been created at the current ECHS@DSU 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 smoothly. 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. There will be a savings of 89,000.

Respectfully Submitted,



Evelyn A. Edney, Ed.D.
ECHS@DSU School Leader