

May 9, 2017

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

Dear Ms. Stouffer,

Thank you for the Charter School Renewal Report for Thomas Edison Charter School (TECS). We appreciate the support from the Charter School Office throughout our 18-year history. Since opening in August 2000, we have been able to retain a large number of our founding teachers and/or staff members with five or more years of service to the children at TECS. Our staff members have been committed for years to serving the children that most of society has forgotten. At TECS, we are providing a safe and caring environment for students and staff where leadership, creativity, problem solving, risk taking and critical thinking are encouraged and supported. The positive culture that we have developed in our school has helped to build resilient students and teachers.

Below is our response to the 2017-18 Renewal Report.

**Academic Performance:**

Our middle school students consistently performed academically at or above the state average on DCAS in ELA and Mathematics. The transition to Smarter Balanced has been met with some successes along with challenges. Smarter Balanced is a much more rigorous test and the students are required to perform tasks that were not previously required on DCAS. Compared to schools with similar student populations, TECS doubled the percent proficient on both Smarter Balanced ELA and Math. Last year, our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA and Math scores on Smarter Balanced were within 10 points of the state average. We were recognized by the state for outstanding growth in multiple grades in middle school Math and Science.

One of our greatest challenges at TECS is increasing and maintaining academic growth for all of our students. Our middle school students (grades 6-8) were successfully performing at or above the state average on DCAS, but our challenge is now moving our elementary and middle students to perform at the same level on Smarter Balanced. Although we have seen growth in our academic performance in our elementary grades, we are still below our target. In our analysis, we have found that our elementary students are less likely to enroll in our after-school, Saturday school and/or summer school programs due to their increased dependency on their parents/caregivers. An additional challenge we face is that our students live in communities in which there is a high rate of crime, poverty, and at-risk behavior. Although we face these additional challenges on a daily basis, our staff is committed to working to help our students overcome these obstacles.

The Delaware School Success Framework does show that TECS was below the state average for proficiency, but we did make improvements in math and science from 2014-15 to 2015-16. A large number of students enter our kindergarten far below many of their peers and struggle with required pre-kindergarten skills. In order to increase literacy proficiency for all of our students in grades K-3, TECS has partnered with Delaware Department of Education to fully implement the Delaware Early Literacy Initiative (DELI). DELI focuses on our youngest students (K-3) and their early literacy skills. The Delaware Early Literacy Initiative is the state's plan to implement a set of improvement strategies that will improve literacy outcomes for all students in our school in grades K-3, focusing on students with disabilities (SWD), including those who are also English Language Learners (ELL). Teachers are participating in targeted professional development geared towards literacy skills and a Multi-Tiered System of Academic Supports (RTI). Our students have shown growth on some interim and state assessments and it is our goal to see even more growth for our students, beginning in the early grades.

The report notes that TECS has exceeded the state average in academic growth for ELA and Math the past two years (2014-15 and 2015-16). We believe that our challenging curriculum, safe environment, dedicated staff, strong culture of support and our student leadership all contribute to this success.

Finally, the report notes that TECS has exceeded the state average in the "On Track to Graduation" data with an over 95% attendance rate, each of the last two years. Being located in North Wilmington, in a community where there is a high rate of crime, poverty and at-risk behavior, it is important to note that the students who attend TECS come to school because they want to be here, believe in the importance of education and the value of attending school each day.

**Organizational Performance:**

Thomas Edison Charter School received an overall "Meets Standard" rating on the Organizational Performance Framework from 2013-2016. Our school is organizationally sound, operates well, fulfills all legal obligations, and provides appropriate access to education for all students, including those with disabilities. We look forward to continuing to meet the Organizational Performance metric.

**Financial Performance:**

Thomas Edison Charter School received an overall "Meets Standard" rating on the Financial Performance Framework from 2013-2016. Our school is financially viable. We look forward to continuing to meet the Financial Performance metric.

Sincerely,



Salome Thomas-EL  
Head of School