

# DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

## CHARTER SCHOOL INFORMATION

Charter School Name: **Thomas A. Edison Charter School**

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City/State/Zip: **Wilmington, DE 19802**

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Head of School: Salome Thomas-EL

11-22-16  
Date

  
Board President: Ronald Pinkett

11/21/16  
Date

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE: December 1<sup>st</sup>**

**All schools submit one (1) signed copy (PDF via email preferred) to the DDOE Charter School Office**

## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:

### **What are the school's academic performance outcomes that will demonstrate student growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness levels as measured by the Performance Framework?**

Thomas A. Edison Charter School (TECS) in Wilmington, Delaware provides a resounding example of a school that is not only meeting the needs of its urban students, but it is also holding its students accountable to elevated levels of academic and personal success. Serving kindergarten through grade 8, TECS has a 96% African American student population with over 90% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Despite the school's "at risk" demographic profile, students have continually shown academic gains. Our graduates typically attend some of Delaware's best public and private high schools on full academic scholarships.

Maintaining the principle of educating the whole child, programs and student opportunities were put into place to ensure that all students have access to a well-rounded education—both in and out of the classroom. The Franklin Covey "Leader In Me" program allows students to learn and practice leadership skills, goal-setting, time management, teamwork, problem-solving, respecting diversity and life balance. Our National Championship Chess Team and the First Move chess program helps students develop their critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.

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. This year, our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA and Math scores on Smarter Balanced are within 10 points of the state average. We were recognized by the state for outstanding growth in middle school Science and Math.

#### **Strengths:**

Thomas Edison Charter School (TECS) has demonstrated considerable growth in academics over the past five years. In 2010, the Board supported adopting a Turn-Around Model of School Reform. This reform spurred additional positive changes to the school's culture, structure, leadership, management, academic programs, parental engagement, and student achievement. Since winning the 2011 State Academic Achievement Award, strategic changes were made to the school's curriculum to propel student achievement even more, including the addition of Engage NY for math and a more comprehensive guided reading program in grades K-5, and SpringBoard, a rigorous Pre-AP math and ELA curriculum in grades 6-8. University of Chicago's STEP (Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress) Reading Assessment, Wilson Language Program, Amplify Reading and Math Assessments, the 100-Book Challenge Program, and the infusion of technology in every classroom were also added. Our middle school students consistently performed academically at or above the state average on DCAS in ELA and Mathematics. Another significant strength is our experienced, dedicated and committed faculty. 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 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.

### **Challenges and Opportunities for Growth**

One of our greatest challenges at TECS is increasing and maintaining academic growth for all of our students. Our middle school students (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 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.

Despite these challenges, we maintain the belief that each and every one of our students can and will be successful as long as the adults in our school care enough not to give up on them. To support our students we have implemented the following: Increased support for teachers and students from our math and literacy coaches, increased planning time for PLC, after-school tutoring, extended school day and school year, summer enrichment programs, STEP reading Assessment, Achieve 3000, a Family Crisis Therapist, Behavioral Health Consultant, and a School and Family Coordinator. One of our major goals is to retain our new teachers and Teach for America corp members longer than their initial two-year commitment. Although we have found some success with extending that commitment to three-years for some teachers, we would like all of our teachers to stay a minimum of 5-years at TECS and remain in Delaware to continue long careers. We understand that struggling students need consistent and strong leadership, administrators, parents and teachers to be successful. Finally, TECS is focused on increasing the level of parental involvement and engagement in our school. Although we have a large number of parents who attend our report card conferences, Back to School Night, Math Night and Reading Night, there are still a considerable amount of parents who struggle to take an active role in the education of their children. Although, we understand the issues in the community affect some of our parents and their ability to be involved at a high level, we know we must support them in supporting their children and their education.

## ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE:

**What are the school's performance expectations in meeting its organizational responsibilities including, but not limited to, administrative operations, reporting, and legal responsibilities as measured by the performance framework?**

Thomas Edison Charter School's organizational rating was Meets Standard for each area for 2015-2016. The School Administration and the Board of Directors ensure the education program in operation reflects the terms as defined in the charter and in compliance with State, Local and Federal requirements.

### **Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities for Growth**

The Board of Directors conduct formal monthly meetings, set policy and provide oversight in the areas of curriculum and instruction, business and personnel management, diversity issues, and overall school operations. Our Board serves as the governing and fiduciary authority of the school, functioning in accordance with the TECS by-laws. The Board has hired an experienced Administrative team which includes a Principal and Assistant Principal with a combined over 40-plus years of teaching, leadership and administrative experience and a CFO with over 25 years of accounting and finance experience.

In addition, the Head of School and CFO develop an annual budget with stakeholders, for review and adoption by the TECS Board of Directors. Thomas Edison Charter School has formed a Citizen's Budget Oversight Committee to ensure accountability and provide support regarding the school and its finances.

Thomas Edison's external audit for 2015-2016 was performed by Haggerty & Haggerty, PA. As in all previous years, an unqualified / unmodified opinion was received. No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were identified. Our audit was completed and submitted to the State of Delaware on September 30, 2016. The October 1<sup>st</sup> due date is extremely tight for TECS. We will continue to look for ways to make this process smoother for us.

## FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE:

**What are the school's financial performance expectations that will demonstrate viability and sustainability as measured by the performance framework? Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas.**

Thomas A. Edison Charter School's Financial Framework Report rating was Meets Standard for each area for 2015-2016. Thomas Edison's external audit for 2015-2016 was performed by Haggerty & Haggerty, PA. As in all previous years, an unqualified/unmodified opinion was received. No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were identified. Our audit was completed timely and submitted to the State of Delaware on September 30, 2016. We had budgeted for and ended the year with a Total Fund Balance increase. We will continue to strive to improve our financial performance.

### **Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities for Growth**

Thomas Edison's Chief Financial Officer is a CPA with over 25 years of finance/accounting experience. Each month the CFO prepares a financial update which includes a forecast for the remainder of the year. Each month the Finance Committee reviews monthly financial information with the CFO, Executive Committee and Board of Directors regarding financial matters. The Finance Committee is responsible for the financial oversight and functions as a subcommittee of the Board of Directors.

The Head of School and CFO, with input from staff and parents, develop an annual budget for review and adoption by the TECS Board of Directors. Thomas Edison Charter School has formed a Citizen's Budget Oversight Committee, which meets on quarterly basis to discuss the school's financial condition to ensure the school's financial stability is secure. The school continues to operate with a reserve fund sufficient to address unanticipated negative occurrences, such as fluctuations in State, Local or Federal revenue, demographic trends or repair on the schools building.

In order to continue to provide Thomas Edison students with much needed resources and on-going capital improvements, not covered or available by State, Local or Federal funds, we will increase our fundraising efforts. To accomplish this, the Thomas Edison Board of Director's fundraising committee is researching options to bring additional revenues into the school. An additional challenge is competing with higher paying districts in the recruiting and retaining experienced teachers with limited funding.

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