

# DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

### CHARTER SCHOOL INFORMATION

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

Mailing Address: **2200 N. Locust St**  
City/State/Zip: **Wilmington, DE 19802**

Email: [info@tecs.k12.de.us](mailto:info@tecs.k12.de.us)  
Telephone: 302-778-1101  
Fax: 302-778-2232  
Website: <http://www.thomasedison.charter.k12.de.us>

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Head of School: Salome Thomas-EL

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Date

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Board President: Ronald Pinkett

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Date

## 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***

Thomas A. Edison Charter School was established in the year 2000 to provide a rigorous education to a historically underserved population of families in North Wilmington. The core philosophy of the school is that all children are capable of learning at high levels if they are taught by caring and dedicated educators, challenged by an engaging and rigorous curriculum, afforded adequate time in school and held to ambitious state and national standards. Improvements in student performance can be achieved with an efficient school model that transforms how students are taught at every grade level.

It is the goal of the board of directors, the school administrators, teachers and support staff of Thomas A. Edison to continually improve all students' ability to be critical thinkers and enable them to meet or exceed the state curriculum standards.

The DE Early Literacy Initiative will allow us to focus our professional development and support on improving literacy of our K-3 students, including those with disabilities and English Language Learners. Also, we feel the Early Literacy Initiative will help us decrease the number of students with disabilities scoring below proficiency on Smarter Balanced.

Thomas A. Edison Charter School was the 2011 State Academic Achievement Award winner and has implemented a number of rigorous and challenging programs including Franklin Covey's 7-Habits leadership training for all students, Pre-AP English in our middle grades, University of Chicago's STEP (Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress) Reading Assessment for grades K-5, Achieve 3000 (a web-based differentiated instructional reading program for struggling and gifted learners), First Move Chess program in grades 2-3, Algebra in the early and middle grades, and our 100-Book Challenge Reading Program school-wide. Many of our programs do not allow us the opportunity to provide onsite coaching, which focuses on literacy and the problem-solving process. Also, we have a great need for resources to support materials for Tier II/Tier III Literacy Interventions.

## 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	"Meets Standard" overall Ratings on one or more Performance Framework reports during 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years	At any point during 2016-17 school year: - Renewed with Conditions - Placed on Formal Review

- 2015-16 and 2016-17 Financial Frameworks - 2016-17 Academic Frameworks	OR Opened in 2016-17 School Year, Never on Formal Review	- Earned “Falls Far Below Standard” on any Framework Report
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## Tier 2 Narrative:

### Academic Performance

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

***Identify areas or factors where the school has not met standard in academic performance. Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas. What are the school’s academic performance outcomes that will improve 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.

One of our largest goals at TECS is increasing and maintaining academic growth for all of our students. Our middle school students (6-8) are moving toward performing at the state average

(8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA Smarter Balanced scores are above the 2015 state average). Our challenge is moving our elementary students (K-5) to perform at the same level. Our elementary students doubled the performance of most similar schools on our Smarter Balanced Test. Although we have seen growth in our academic performance in grades K-3, we are still below our target. In our analysis, we have found that our elementary students are less likely to enroll in after-school programs, Saturday school and/or summer school programs due to their being more dependent on parents/care givers. 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. We understand that struggling students need consistent and strong leadership, administrators, parents and teachers to be successful. 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. We are excited to participate in the Early Literacy Initiative.

### **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.

The academic progress of all students at Thomas Edison Charter School is one of our highest priorities. Please refer to pages 11-13 of the Thomas Edison Charter School renewal application submitted September 2017 for a detailed description of the strategies and progress monitoring we utilize to ensure all students are growing.

### Organizational Performance

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

***Identify areas or factors where the school has not met standard in organizational performance. Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas. What are the school's performance outcomes 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 2016-2017 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, 2017. 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.

The organizational performance at Thomas Edison Charter School is one of our highest priorities. Please refer to page 26 of the Thomas Edison Charter School renewal application submitted September 2017 for more information.

### Financial Performance

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

***Identify areas or factors where the school has not met standard in financial performance. Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas. What are the school's financial performance outcomes that will demonstrate viability and sustainability as measured by the Performance Framework?***

Thomas A. Edison Charter School's Financial Framework Report rating was Meets Standard for each area for 2016-2017. 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.

