

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [X] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Gregory R. Meece Sr.

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Newark Charter School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2001 Patriot Way

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Newark State DE Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19711-3568

County New Castle County

Telephone (302) 369-2001 Fax (302) 368-3460

Web site/URL http://www.NewarkCharter.org E-mail Gregory.Meece@ncs.k12.de.us

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Gregory Meece Sr. E-mail gregory.meece@ncs.k12.de.us

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Newark Charter School Tel. (302) 369-2001

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Steven Dressel

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	91	97	188
1	100	91	191
2	109	81	190
3	93	98	191
4	98	93	191
5	98	96	194
6	92	99	191
7	83	81	164
8	90	76	166
9	79	80	159
10	69	89	158
11	77	81	158
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	1079	1062	2141

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 13 % Asian
 - 11 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 65 % White
 - 6 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 0%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	2140
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.005
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	0

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %
72 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish, Arabic, Urdu, Telugu, Bengali, Malayalam, Tigrigna, Turkish, Swahili, Vietnamese, Korean, Hindi, Punjabi, Chinese, Twi, Bulgarian, Kenyan, Amhavic, Farsi, Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, Tamil

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 13 %
Total number students who qualify: 283

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
167 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 7 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 3 Hearing Impairment
- 6 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 2 Orthopedic Impairment
- 29 Other Health Impaired
- 77 Specific Learning Disability
- 29 Speech or Language Impairment
- 1 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 1 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 12 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 15
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	5
Classroom teachers	122
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals	22
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	9

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2010

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

The Mission of the Newark Charter School is to promote high levels of student effort, achievement and decorum for children in grades K-12 in the Greater Newark community by providing continuous, engaging and rigorous academic challenges grounded in a sequential core of common knowledge, delivered in a community of students, educators and involved parents who value scholarship and appropriate behavior.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Charter School: Application is open to all Delaware residents. Students are selected by lottery.

PART III – SUMMARY

In 1999, parents and teachers in the Greater Newark community committed themselves to providing an educational alternative within the public school system when they established Newark Charter School. Conceived by parents and teachers, the school provides an alternative, rigorous and academically challenging program for students. A community-based school with continuity from grade to grade and strong site-based management is the best model to foster parental involvement, improve school environment and motivate students. The school's theme is "Emphasizing Excellence in Academics and Decorum." Our philosophy is to serve a diverse student population by challenging each student at his or her level so that all students exceed the state standards and reach their full potential. Features of the school that are considered innovative, unique or integral to fulfilling the school's mission and philosophy include the following:

- Core Knowledge Curriculum (K-8)
- Emphasis on Decorum
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (S.T.E.M.) Academy and Global Studies/ Leadership Academy (9-12)
- Emphasis on Parent Involvement
- Instructional Grouping
- Accountability, Autonomy and Choice
- Advanced Placement Diploma Program (9-12)

In the year 2000, Delaware's State Board of Education approved the school's charter. Unable to secure a permanent facility at that time, in 2001 we opened our doors in rented trailers on leased property. The first year's enrollment was 435 students in grades 5-7. The following year we added grade eight. Still unable to find a permanent home for the school, the Board of Directors sought permission from the State Board of Education to remain in the trailers for a second year. To accommodate the additional students, four additional classrooms were leased from the Newark Day Nursery located directly across the street. In time for the 2003-2004 school year we were able to purchase property for a two-story middle school. In 2006 we received a charter modification allowing the school to expand its grade configuration from grades 5-8 to grades Kindergarten to 8. With this expansion, and the construction of a new three-story elementary school on the campus, our enrollment increased from 648 students to 1,286 students in 2007. In 2010, we again requested approval to expand enrollment. In 2012, we received unanimous approval to expand all grades to 190 students and to add a high school. This new school opened in 2013. Currently, the school enrolls 2140 students in grades K-11, with 12th grade being added next year. In terms of enrollment, we are the largest school in Delaware, with 3,550 students on our waiting list.

Since the school's inception in 2001, Newark Charter School's (NCS) academic achievement results have been consistently excellent. The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has given the school its highest ratings, including Superior School and Reward/Recognition School. In 2010 and again in 2016 the DDOE nominated Newark Charter School for the U.S. Government's Blue Ribbon School designation for academic excellence. In 2015 the school was named a National Title I Distinguished School, one of only 57 schools nationwide to receive that honor. To date, NCS is the only charter school in our state to receive this honor. For its grade levels, Newark Charter School has the highest scores in Delaware on the Smarter Balanced state assessments.

As Delaware's first charter school to receive Blue Ribbon status, we leveraged our success in two different ways. First, the 2010 Blue Ribbon designation was a catalyst in helping us seek and obtain approval to expand by adding a high school to our successful K-8 program. Second, we have endeavored to assist other schools in reaching their goals. As just one example, Las Américas ASPIRA Academy opened its doors in August 2011 with over 300 students in grades K-5, adding a grade each year to become a K-8 school. This dual-language immersion school adopted Newark Charter School's curriculum and our staff have mentored and even helped hire teachers for this school.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The NCS curriculum is a melding of the Common Core State Standards, the Delaware Science Standards, and the Core Knowledge Sequence of content topics. The school's founders desired a rigorous, somewhat classical curriculum and the Core Knowledge (CK) Sequence provided the instructional scope and sequence they sought. As much as possible CK scope and sequence are honored at each grade level, but there are grades and content areas where the disparity with the state standards requires NCS to adjust the topics taught and align with the standards. Skills and content are merged with higher order thought and problem-solving to create an active classroom. Content is well-integrated across domains.

Teachers utilize a wide range of best practices and pedagogical techniques to ensure that all students reach their potential. Technology enters the classrooms to amplify and virtualize global experiences and learning. Teachers are sensitive to the variety of learning styles and modalities the students bring to the classroom and work diligently to differentiate instruction. They collaborate about student learning preferences during professional development and planning times. For those students struggling or performing below grade level in the areas of reading and/or math, Response to Intervention is implemented with the use of our reading specialists, special educators, instructional interventionists, and classroom teachers. For students performing above their grade level, teachers differentiate within the heterogeneous classroom in the primary grades through the assignments, readings, math problems, and additional small group instruction to ensure these students receive the necessary challenge for them to continue to grow. Beginning in grade 4, students are grouped by ability to receive intense instruction based on their level.

NCS believes in a strong, language-rich classroom from the very beginning. To that end, all ELA and reading/writing instruction is based in literature, both classic and current. Students are taught to appreciate their power with words, and as such read, write and converse throughout their day.

While they are learning the sounds of the language, students are encouraged to talk, draw and write about their experiences to reinforce that learning. Elementary teachers utilize a literature-based approach that features guided reading instruction using leveled readers and share rich traditional literature from many cultures as per the Core Knowledge recommendations. The reading instruction continues beyond the elementary years using read-alouds, shared reading, literature circle studies, and independent reading. Comprehension is the focus of all response work done.

In the grades following, reading instruction continues to be literature-based using the novels, short stories, poetry, speeches, and other genres of literature recommended in the Core Knowledge Sequence through grade 8 and through the course syllabi in grades 9-11. Students study the models and respond to the literature in multi-sensory activities allowing them to show their understanding and reasoning abilities. Students are encouraged to return to the text to support their ideas in writing and discussion. Reading skills are likewise developed in the content classes through non-fiction reading. At NCS, every teacher is a reading teacher.

Newark Charter School believes that in order for mathematical mastery to take place, every student should receive regular, guided opportunities for application of number sense, problem solving, automaticity with operations, and making connections from concept to concept. Earlier learnings are continuously revisited for them to become second nature. We believe that in order to instill a high level of engagement with problem solving, students of all grades need to be provided with opportunities to approach similar kinds of problems in a variety of ways. As with other content areas mentioned, knowledge builds upon knowledge in math as well. For example, in second grade, students study the topic of fractions in regards to wholes, halves, fourths, and thirds. While in grades following, students are adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing these fractions with like and unlike denominators.

In regards to Science, Social Studies, and History, Core Knowledge is a spiraling sequence of topics. Therefore much of the primary grades' content seems advanced to those new to CK. Teachers and parents

find the kindergarten children conversing about Columbus and his dealings with Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain or ably locating the seven continents on a world map. Later in third grade, students will continue to develop understanding about why, when, and how other explorers sailed west from Europe and began settlements. By now they have learned to interpret maps using the keys/legends, identify the major oceans by name and position, and are filling out the maps of North and South America with the names and positions of modern political divisions like Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. The same takes place when it comes to Science. In first grade, the students learn about the Human Body. This unit includes taking care of the body, skeletal, muscular, digestive, circulatory, and nervous system. While in fourth grade, the students dig deeper into the circulatory system with the pioneering work of William Harvey, the heart, blood, filtering function of the liver and spleen, and the fatty deposits that can clog blood vessels and cause a heart attack. Whether the topics are first being introduced in the primary years or the students are digging deeper in the Intermediate and Jr. High School Years, the content is delivered in a way that is developmentally appropriate for all levels of learners.

Secondary School:

Rigorous academics are the core of the Newark Charter High School program. We are proud to offer two unique academic tracks in our high school: the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (S.T.E.M.) Academy and the Global Studies/Leadership Academy. Both Academies are grounded in a common core of studies, with opportunities for students to focus on challenging programs of interest and career pathways. Students will also be able to explore opportunities for enrichment through elective courses and complementary activities outside the classroom. Within these academies students may choose one of the following career pathways as required for graduation:

- Biotechnology
- Business, Finance and Marketing
- Computer Science
- Design and Engineering
- Global Context for Leadership

In the core areas of study, students will access courses in the college preparatory, honors and advanced placement levels based on the student's individual academic needs. As of the 2015-16 school year, Newark Charter High School is the only high school in Delaware to implement College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone Diploma Program, which challenges students to develop the skills that matter most for their future college success: research, collaboration, and communication. The Capstone Diploma Program includes a two course sequence: AP Seminar and AP Research. Students who complete this sequence--with scores of 3 or higher--are then eligible to complete the diploma program by earning scores of 3 or higher on four additional AP exams in subjects of their choosing. Newark Charter High School is projected to offer approximately 20 AP courses by the 2016-2017 school year. Newark Charter High School graduation requirements exceed those of the State of Delaware to ensure preparation for post-secondary education.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Newark Charter School believes students should be well-rounded. We feel that through attaining a foundation of other curriculum areas such as the arts, languages, physical education, and technology, children are able to communicate their ideas, feelings, and judgements to others.

Arts:

Students begin participating in the arts starting in kindergarten and continue through eleventh grade. Every student takes an art and/or music class at least once each week depending on the grade level. Early instruction in the arts provides many opportunities to sing, dance, listen to music, play act, draw, paint, and create objects. Children are exposed to a variety of artists, paintings, types of music, and composers. As children's foundational knowledge progresses, they begin to learn more about the methods and terminology regarding the facets of art and music. They also become much more familiar with quite a range of great artists and masterpieces.

With almost half of the student body in grades 4 and up participating in a music performing group, Newark

Charter School provides one of the most extensive music and performing arts experiences in the area. It includes various choruses and band for grades 4 through high school and orchestra for grades 3 through high school. Students in grades 5 and up have the option to participate in musical theatre and drama programs.

Physical Education/Health/Nutrition:

Students in all grades participate in physical education at least once per week. Beginning in the primary grades, children participate in activities related to perceptual power, creative movements and verbal commands, basic body movements involving level, speed, and strength. Once students enter into the middle school and high school grades, they will participate in games applying all basic motor movements designed for whole group dynamics and team interaction. There is a strong emphasis on team building, trust and communication development, and implementing problem solving skills involving the mind and body.

Newark Charter School strives to offer programs and activities to match every student interest. We offer a full array of competitive athletic teams in the middle school, junior high school and high school. These include varsity and JV boys and girls soccer, field hockey, volleyball, cross country, boys and girls basketball, baseball, softball, boys and girls lacrosse, golf, tennis, swimming, wrestling and track. We offer several intramural sports and clubs such as Mountain Biking Club, Fitness Club and Girls on the Run.

Lastly, beginning in grade 6, students participate in a health class that focuses on the elements of fitness and well-being, anatomy and physiology, hygiene, heart disease and related issues, peer pressure, alcohol and drug use, community health, and forming and maintaining healthy relationships. Once students enter into high school, health, nutrition, and how the body functions are elaborated upon through courses such as Integrated Science in 9th grade, Biology in 10th grade, Chemistry in 11th grade, and Physics in 12th grade.

Foreign Languages:

NCS begins world languages instruction in grade 4 with a half-year exploratory of conversational Spanish. Spanish instruction continues on through the high school. In addition, in grades 7 and 8, students have the option of taking a class in exploratory Chinese or French. Chinese, French, and Spanish are all options for students to pursue in grades 9-12. In each of these languages, instruction begins with learning a variety of greetings, days of the week, months of the year, numbers 1-20, identification of themselves and others, recognizing and practicing different types of sentences, descriptions of nouns, and asking and answering simple questions. As students progress through the levels of a language, the skills learned are embedded into application of learning, solving problems, and communicating.

Technology:

Beginning in kindergarten, all students participate in a formal technology class. Students in the primary grades learn how to use a mouse, keyboard, a variety of computer programs, and foundational typing skills. Once students move into the intermediate and junior/senior high school grades, they learn about internet safety, differences between Linux and window terminals, formal typing skills, constructing a word document, organization of digital files, web browser use, and advanced word processing skills. Through the application of all the facets of technology instruction mentioned above, students are able to formulate paragraphs, essays, and term papers using technology.

In addition to several technology labs located in each of the school's three buildings, all classrooms are equipped with computers with wireless Internet access for student use. Additionally, there are mobile laptop computer labs.. Most classrooms are equipped with SMART Board interactive whiteboards or computer projection systems. The Media Centers on each campus includes library collections as well as computer networks for use by all students.

Additional Curriculum Programs:

In 2005 Newark Charter School implemented the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program. The research-based program helps enhance our school culture where everyone has a part to play. Everyone has a right to a safe school where students feel secure and treat each other with mutual respect and kindness.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Newark Charter School relishes the fact that our student body is more diverse than our surrounding community. Though often misunderstood, our lottery is blind to the demographics and abilities of those who would seek entrance. Consequently, we comprise a full range of students representing a range of ethnicity, race, language groups, and ability. Approximately 8% of our students are identified with a specific learning disability. The remainder of the student population mirrors the full range of abilities possible in a K-11 school.

NCS attempts to meet the needs of every student. Teachers are well-trained in recognizing learning styles, preferences and modalities. They have participated in a number of professional development activities in recent years focused on best practices, differentiation in planning and delivery of instruction, and using assessment data to plan for differentiation. In any given class there may be found in-class support instructors for math, reading, or special education. There are paraprofessionals on staff who work to provide individual accommodations for students who need them, whether specifically identified or simply needing help. NCS employs two reading specialists and two instructional interventionists.

NCS utilizes technology to facilitate instruction. With computer stations in almost all classrooms, 6 class-sized computer labs among three buildings, 2 IPAD carts, and numerous portable laptop labs, our students benefit from the instructional supports possible through technology. Across the grades, teachers offer options to students when doing project-oriented lessons and units. Students may respond to their learning using personal or cooperative groupings. They may likewise create visual support for their projects using the technology tools at their disposal, or rely more on the traditional means of reporting what they know to teachers.

ELL and special education students are served successfully at NCS through a combination of in-class and pull-out options. They fully participate in the curriculum of the school with accommodations in place to ensure success. Parents are frequently apprised of progress and of the many ways in which they can support their child's special learning circumstances. As an example, sixth grade special education students with specific IEP goals in reading will have a reading group led either in a mainstream class or grouped in a separate classroom, but both will be led by the special education teacher who monitors and teaches. They may be using a Saddleback Classic version of Julius Caesar or The Prince and the Pauper, as their classmates read the Barron's or Puffin Books versions. Though the readability levels are different, both groups of students can and do enter in to conversations about the text that enhance their comprehension. The teachers will craft differentiated assessments to enable all students to share what they have learned. Our special education students successfully perform when they graduate and move on to high school and college as well.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

NCS utilizes assessment data daily to inform instruction. We administer the NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) as a progress monitoring resource three times per year to all students grades K-10. Likewise, the Smarter Balanced assessments are given annually in grades 3-8. The Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System is administered in Science in grades 5 and 8 and in Social Studies in grades 4 and 7.

Teachers use the data for grouping and planning for instruction, evaluation of instruction, RTI, and consideration of acceleration or retention. Administrators use the data as well to evaluate effectiveness of programming and instruction, to make staffing decisions, to make program changes, additions, or deletions.

Grades K-1 use data from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skill (DIBELS), as well as benchmark checklists, IRIs and commercial reading assessment systems (Houghton Mifflin) to inform instruction.

Data is distributed regularly to staff, who also have access via online passwords to reports, so that

instruction may be informed in an ongoing manner. Teacher leaders prepare comparative data charts for teachers to analyze longitudinal assessment information.

Normal summative assessment results are reported to parents continuously through the online resource of eSchool Plus, where parents have immediate access to their student's grades as they are posted. Communication frequently continues between parent and teacher via email and Edline pages, and Interim reports and report cards each trimester or marking period provide recorded grade period evaluation against both competencies and standards. Honor Rolls are publicized to parents beginning in grade 7.

Regular standardized assessments mentioned above are reported both at parent request or in a hard-copy in the final report card of the year. Both (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) test results are sent to parents. Classroom teachers share during conferences and other parent communications the results of these and ongoing formative and summative evaluations concerning the students. Weekly folders that go to each home contain the work of completed student assessments for parents to look over.

In Newark Charter School's High School, students participate in the following assessments: PSAT in 9th-11th grade, SAT in 11th grade, over 20 different AP exams, DCAS in 10th grade, and End of Course Exams in US History and Integrated Math III.

NCS periodically publishes the summary results of standardized tests for various grades in weekly and quarterly newsletters and publications available to both the school and the greater Newark community. Frequently the NCS assessment results become material for articles in the local newspapers. This school year, an array of graphs and data charts are displayed in the lobbies of the school. Parents and visitors frequently discuss the data with staff members when they come to the school.

We use our success to encourage and model for other area charter schools the high standards possible to others. NCS administrators participate in statewide collaboratives such as the The Delaware Charter School Network, the DOE Curriculum Cadre, the Delaware Educational Support System and others sharing the practices and thinking that has built our vision and mission.

NCS administrators are dedicated to sharing what has worked well for us. As such, they participate in statewide councils, committees and task force opportunities that ultimately assist DOE in spreading the ideas that work and should be spread abroad in education.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Newark Charter School's motto is “Excellence in Academics and Decorum.” The school has made it a priority to create an orderly, safe environment that allows teachers to teach and students to learn. School uniforms have been in place from the beginning to promote discipline, respect, and a focus on learning. Strict absentee and tardiness policies teach students to value the importance of education. Students encourage one another to adopt good behavior, good manners, honesty, politeness and civic-mindedness.

Everyone has a right to a safe school where students feel secure and treat each other with mutual respect and kindness. Ours was the first school in Delaware to implement the research-based Olweus Anti-Bullying Program. The program enhances school culture because everyone has a part to play. Years later, such anti-bullying programs would become mandatory in Delaware public schools.

Newark Charter School was one of two Delaware schools designated “No Place For Hate” schools. NCS students were #1, #2, #3 in state Teen Dating Violence and Prevention Month Instagram Contest. The “Gold Service Leadership School” was awarded to the high school for the students’ Jefferson Awards community service activities.

During the 2014-15 school year, NCS had 54 suspendable. This represents 1.8 % of the school population compared to the state average of 13%.

The school is also committed to strong site-based management. Internally, the staff decision making process is modeled after management practices at large integrated companies. Each grade is represented by a team leader to provide a horizontal perspective – what are the students in a particular grade experiencing. Academic core content areas are representative by department heads to provide a vertical perspective – how does each topic flow from one grade to the next.

The staff is stable and its membership is highly satisfied with school and workplace conditions. In the spring of 2015, Workplace Dynamics conducted a survey of our employees. This survey measures the company’s organizational health and how its employees feel about their job and working conditions. The school was recognized as a Top Workplaces (ranked second in the state in the mid-size company category). Workplace Dynamics compared NCS’s over 375 employee comments and responses received to a benchmark of all other Primary and Secondary Schools that were surveyed. In every category, and for every question asked, the NCS scores were higher than the benchmark.

Newark Charter School is the only school in Delaware to offer its teachers and staff members merit pay.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Newark Charter School is a community-based school; a model that fosters parental involvement, improves the school environment and motivates the students. As a school established by parents, there is a high degree of parent involvement and parent satisfaction each year. NCS is recipient of the Delaware Department of Education Parent Partnership Award. Parent surveys consistently show that parents are virtually 100% satisfied with the school. In response to the School Council’s parent survey question, “I volunteer my time at my child's school,” 58% of the respondents indicated that they had. Parents have authentic participation in school-wide decision making. They hold the majority of seats on the Board of Directors. The School Council, consisting of parent-elected parent representatives from each grade level, serves as a “sounding board” to management on issues. It conducts and monitors two formal parent satisfaction surveys annually. The Friends of NCS is an active and essential parent organization, providing volunteers, fund raising support, and programs to enrich the school. A total of 500 different parent volunteers served the school this past year.

In order to foster a “small community feel” to a large and growing school with three buildings on two

campuses, the School Director continued his in-house newsletter for staff called STAFF MATTERS. This is typically a four page weekly publication featuring news about staff members to keep them “connected” to each other and to keep them informed about what is happening school wide.

The school has multiple committees whose membership include community representatives, parents and teachers. For example, there are Advisory Committees for each of the school's STEM programs including Biotechnology, Engineering and Computer Science, as well as Business Education. A Citizen Business Advisory Committee oversees school budget and finance issues. A parent special education committee was established in 2016.

3. Professional Development:

Teachers need to study instructional ideas in order to continue to grow. Newark Charter is committed in all ways to growing every staff member in an ongoing process. The Delaware teacher licensing regulations require teachers to acquire 90 hours of quality professional development over the five years of each continuing license renewal. To meet this end, many options are afforded to the NCS staff.

Guidance is provided to teachers who are pursuing degree programs or further expertise in their content areas. The Dean of Instruction and building level principals meet with the teachers to aide in their endeavoring to sort out their preferences for advanced study.

Annually, all teachers complete a professional development interest survey where they list the areas of development they would like to pursue. They are also asked to indicate if there are areas of development in which they feel accomplished and could lead or facilitate a study group. Using this information, the NCS administration plans a series of book studies and study groups throughout the year, all approved by the Dean of Instruction. Resources are sought out and collaborative planning occurs. As the year unfolds, a large number of teachers earn hours meeting with colleagues to discuss recent research and best practices and participating in self-reflection.

Following a two-day assessment symposium, teachers have continued to work on the delivery of assessment to students, their philosophy of grading, and the manner in which we report progress. These areas were informed by the work of national voices in the field like Rick Stiggins, Rick Wormeli and Ken O'Connor. The difficult ongoing effort made by the teachers has born fruit in better reporting of student progress to parents, fewer concerns about grading and assessment, and students relating better to content and assessment than in previous years.

Likewise, all-school programming is provided on professional development days scattered throughout the year. Areas of study in recent years have been assessment and grading, implementation of the Common Core State Standards, developing questions that align to the Depth of Knowledge, vertical articulation of curricular content, differentiation, training for new technology tools for teaching, and best practices for delivering reading, writing, and math instruction. All of these areas support academic standards, student achievement and improvement.

Through professional development days, PLC's, post-observation meetings, and team planning, professional conversations are constantly taking place to analyze the work relating to all areas of study.

4. School Leadership:

As described in the sections above, the school believes in strong site-based management -- the decision-making should be in the hands of those who are closest to the students. Therefore, the teachers, parents and the students themselves have a strong sense of "ownership" of the school. We believe, that this is a strong contributor to our students' academic achievement. The membership of the Board of Directors is meant to be inclusive of the school's stakeholder groups. It includes at least three parent representatives, two teacher representatives and community members. The roles of the board and that of the school management are distinct. The roles and responsibilities of the board are to establish the overriding policies that distinguish the school, ensure that the school's charter is adhered to by the management, and approve annual budgets

as proposed by management. The roles and responsibilities of management are communicating the school's goals to the staff, ensuring that the staff adheres to the school's charter, hiring and establishing performance milestones for the staff, reviewing academic programs, formulating and managing the budget, recruiting staff and developing funding sources.

The school's management uses a team approach, which incorporate the best aspects of charter schools and districts. The School Director acts as "superintendent". Although one entity, Newark Charter School has primary, intermediate and junior/senior high school buildings. Each building's day-to-day operations are managed by a principal. Principals and the dean of instruction serve as instructional leaders in their buildings. They conduct classroom observations and perform formal teacher evaluations. To make sure the school director does not become isolated from instructional programming and delivery, he conducts walkthrough observations with written feedback provided to approximately 120 teachers each year. He also writes a weekly newsletter called "STAFF Matters", which strives to connect colleagues and to share information about the staff as people among the three buildings. Every staff member gets a one-on-one summative evaluation meeting with an administrator at the end of each school year and bonuses are awarded based on performance results.

To ensure that the focus of each day is on student learning and the curriculum, the principals in the primary and intermediate school end the morning announcements each day with a grade and content-specific challenge question based on the K-8 Core Knowledge curriculum. Students in their homerooms discuss the correct answer and send representatives to the office to share out their answers. This practice had been done every school day for the last 15 years.

The Administrative Team, which includes the School Director, three principals, dean of instruction and business manager meet weekly to brainstorm and evaluate what is working well and where improvements are needed. Other stakeholders are brought into these meetings to ensure strong ties among departments and administration. For example, the technology director gives a report every week because the functionality of computers, projectors and even copy machines can impact instruction. Guidance counselors are invited in to discuss anti-bullying strategies or state assessment data. Special education staff may report on compliance requirements or the need for additional resources for students with complex needs. The team believes that everything contributes to a positive learning environment. The facilities director attends these meetings every few weeks to share topics related to how buildings and grounds affect students and staff (e.g., safety and security, clean and orderly hallways, comfortable temperatures in the classroom, cost-saving related to energy consumption so more resources can be diverted to instruction, etc.) Even bus drivers are trained in anti-bullying efforts and participate in meetings with administrators.

There is a constant flow of achievement data and student progress shared between home and school. Student classroom assessment results are available to parents daily, in "real time" through an on-line program called Home Access Center. All teachers are required to maintain classroom web pages and keep them updated on at least a weekly basis. Deficiency reports are sent home and parents are contact when a student is in danger of failing -- with ample time to work together to keep that from happening. At the same time, Parent-Grams are mailed home to inform parents of the good things there children are doing in school.

Budgetary decisions related to instruction are arrived at from the "bottom-up". That is, the formulation of the budget begins by asking the teachers what resources they need to help their students be successful. This information goes to faculty grade-level team leaders and department heads. From there it goes to building principals, to the school director and, finally, to the Board.

Finally, the School Council, comprised of all administrators, elected teacher representatives from each of the three buildings and elected parent representatives from each of the school's 13 grade levels meet on a regular basis. The Council serves as a sounding board to aide decision-making in all areas, from the code of conduct to the curriculum.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Many practices in place at Newark Charter School (NCS) contribute to our students' academic success: the K-12 continuity of educational services, site-based management, shared decision-making, a market-driven and service-oriented mindset, a commitment to diversity, parent involvement, instructional grouping, a community-based school, etc. Without a doubt, however, the one practice that defines who we are and contributes mightily to the overall success of our students is summed up by our school's motto: "Excellence in Academics and Decorum."

Rarely, does a school link academics and school climate, much less consider them as interdependent and co-equal, to the extent that Newark Charter School does.

NCS was conceived by parents and teachers interested in an alternative, rigorous and academically challenging curriculum for children. Our philosophy is to serve a diverse student population by challenging each student at his or her level so that all students exceed standards and reach their full potential. The guiding vision of the school is that all children can learn when they are challenged, supported, respected and motivated.

Since its inception, the school has utilized the Core Knowledge curriculum scope and sequence. It is a coherent, cumulative, and interdisciplinary. Most importantly, it presents the specific body of lasting knowledge that should form the core of a preschool to 8th grade curriculum. Knowledge builds on knowledge. All students, regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds or past levels of achievement, have a level academic playing field and are able to achieve goals when the bar is set high for them.

A strong curriculum and great teachers are essential to academic success, but without a learning environment that is equally strong and great the chances of success are diminished. We believe that the combination of a rigorous and academically challenging curriculum, excellent and accountable teachers, and a school-wide commitment to a culture of decorum (including buy-in from the parents and students) has made Newark Charter School a Blue Ribbon School.

An environment that allows teachers to teach and students to learn is essential. Teachers model respect, caring and professionalism. Discipline is depicted positively, where educators see themselves as the "master teachers" and they see their students as "disciples" (where the word "discipline" comes from). School uniforms promote a focus on learning. Attendance policies teach students to value the importance of education. Clean and orderly facilities and grounds reflect school pride and the importance of education. Students encourage one another to adopt good behavior, good manners, honesty, politeness and civic-mindedness. Ours was the first school in Delaware to implement a research-based anti-bullying program where everyone has a part to play. Abundant community service activities develop competent, capable, caring leaders and they are designed to instill a lifelong love of serving others.

We are a community that shares a common vision of what excellence looks like, and every student, parent, teacher and administrator pulls together in the same direction, every day, to achieve that vision. "Excellence in Academics and Decorum." This is our "North Star."