



OUR KIDS CAN!

DECA ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



OUR KIDS CAN!



OUR KIDS CAN SUCCEED!

Since 2003, the Dayton Early College Academy (DECA) has lived out a singular focus: to ensure that young people from the city of Dayton have the opportunity to become college graduates who will one day be leaders of our community. Much has changed in the world over the past 20 years, and in some spaces college attainment is no longer en vogue, but at DECA we know that the clearest path to living a successful life remains earning a post-secondary education—specifically a college degree. Moreover, we know that we serve young people who are ambitious, intelligent, and capable of excelling long after they have graduated from high school. In fact, our motto for the 2023-24 school year was “Our Kids Can.”

As we open the 2024-25 school year, I am so excited to share that Charlie Bull is DECA's new Deputy Superintendent. Charlie joined DECA as a teacher in 2011 and has served as a junior high teacher, founding teacher at DECA PREP, an assistant principal at PREP, founding principal of DECA Middle, and most recently as our Director of Human Resources. I'm thrilled to see Charlie step into a larger leadership role within the DECA community, and I can't wait to see how he helps us reach new heights. Charlie is an exemplary leader with an indefatigable passion for our scholars, our families, our staff, and our organization. He has a proven track record of success, an unquestionable work ethic, and a relentless commitment to improving himself and our schools. Anyone who has spent any time with him knows that he lives our core values every single day.

In the pages to come, you will see highlights of just a few of the amazing things that happen in our schools day after day. We will also share with you the places where we endeavor to improve to ensure our students have every opportunity available to them.

WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO HAVE YOUR SUPPORT AND FOR YOUR CONTINUED BELIEF THAT OUR KIDS CAN!



David A. Taylor
David Taylor, Superintendent

Our belief that ‘Our Kids Can’ is at the heart of what makes DECA special. We know our students can excel beyond high school because, year after year, our graduates complete college at a rate five times the national average for students from similar demographics (56%). This deeply ingrained belief is shared by everyone who volunteers and supports our mission. It's why so many of you mentor students, tutor small groups, edit papers, and host job shadows and internships.

“Year after year, our graduates complete college at a rate five times the national average for students from similar demographics.”

OUR KIDS CAN ACHIEVE!

At DECA, we hold a steadfast belief that every child can go to and thrive through college. We see every student as a budding scholar, full of untapped potential and ready to blossom. When we invest in their capabilities with unwavering faith and support, we witness remarkable transformations—hesitant whispers of “I can’t” evolve into confident declarations of “I can and I will.” By fostering an environment of investing in relationships and demanding success, we empower our students to pursue their academic dreams with vigor and joy as evidenced in these success stories and strategies used throughout the year.

Gates Scholars

Every year, approximately 75,000-100,000 high school seniors apply for the prestigious Gates Scholarship, with only 300 students across the nation selected as recipients. This is a “last dollar, merit based” scholarship for minorities with financial need. DECA is proud to announce that two of our graduates were named recipients, **Kenneth Irvin** and **Je’Leycia Procter**.



STEM OPPORTUNITIES

2023-2024 was a fantastic year for STEM across our district. DECA PREP hosted their first science fair, DECA Middle created a well attended after school STEM program, and DECA High reestablished a competitive Robotics team.



“In terms of life long success, these kids can have it all and DECA gives them the opportunity.”

—Ellen Ireland

AWESOME ACHIEVEMENTS



“My DECA experience has cemented in me a work ethic that has gotten me this far, and will surely continue to propel me further.”

—Phillip Talley, Class of 2020
DECA Grad and Early College Coordinator at DECA



THE SUPPORTER

Seedop

with Ellen and Jeff Ireland

- Ellen and Jeff Ireland know what it takes to help DECA scholars achieve their goals. Having successfully raised two children of their own, Ellen and Jeff have mentored, guided, and encouraged DECA scholars since their dear friend and former DECA Superintendent Dr. Judy Hennessey asked them to volunteer many, many years ago. Ellen and Jeff have helped students write and edit papers and speeches, led book clubs, transported students to various locations, and even taught a DECA student how to drive! Their DECA family tree has grown over the years, and many of these relationships have continued on well past high school and college. Today, Ellen and Jeff have a scholarship fund to help a deserving college bound graduate, and they continue to help our scholars achieve their dreams no matter what the need may be. Thank you, Ellen and Jeff, for helping our kids achieve great things and for living out the DECA Core Value of *Investing Deeply in Relationships*!



33% of the class of 2024 earned full tuition or better scholarships

56% of DECA alumni graduate college within 6 years compared to 11% of their overall demographic

DECA



Record 437 Gateways passed in 2023-2024

2024 College Credits Earned: 1,123

Class of 2024 earned over \$7 million in scholarships

OUR KIDS CAN CREATE!

Here at DECA, we are immensely proud of our scholars as they tap into their creative sides to achieve remarkable feats. From orchestrating a district-wide Black History Month show that dazzled and inspired, to our third graders bringing the community together with a vibrant market day outreach, their creativity knows no bounds. We're thrilled to see robotics making a comeback, sparking curiosity and innovation. And let's not forget our new district-wide school store, The Bullpen, a testament to their entrepreneurial spirit and teamwork. Our students are not just learning—they're creating, building, and leaving a lasting impact.

"I think that DECA is so much more than just a school district; they are truly a force that uplifts and empowers the entire community."

—Kajeza Hawkins,
Class of 2016



THE BULLPEN

"Putting lived experiences to paper is priceless. No one creates goodness alone."

—Sierra Leone



SIERRA LEONE

Artist in Residence

We are thankful for the Ohio Arts Council for providing an annual grant which allows us to offer an arts program at DECA High. The talented Sierra Leone works as our Artist in Residence and she has taken the time, energy, and her many connections with artists in the city to create a program that pushes our students in their artistic talents. Under Sierra Leone's guidance, DECA has students creating and performing spoken word pieces, painting canvases as a way of expressing feelings, and creating entire programs that exhibit multiple forms of art from across the campus.

Ohio Arts COUNCIL

OUR
KIDS
CAN!

The Bullpen is an initiative driven by the dynamic Young Entrepreneurs class at DECA High, and is a testament to the entrepreneurial spirit flourishing within our student community. Every product available is a result of the collaborative efforts of our dedicated student team, guided by the insightful leadership of DECA High teacher Ms. Melita Peeks.

"DECA played a huge role in my development and equipped me with a sense of accountability." —Kyla Wilson, Class of 2013

DECA

OUR KIDS CAN LEAD!

At DECA, we believe that leadership starts with confidence and character. By building strong, supportive relationships with our scholars, we empower them to step forward and take the lead. We nurture their potential, guiding them to not only excel academically but also to give back to their community with a generous heart and a strong sense of integrity. Our students are learning to lead by example, showing that true leadership is about making a positive impact and inspiring others to follow suit. At DECA, we are proud to cultivate the leaders of tomorrow, who will shape a brighter future for us all.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

DECA High ninth graders in Mr. Andrew Kremer's History class worked in small groups to create research projects centered around current issues facing the Dayton community. Various leaders from the Dayton area were invited to come to DECA High to participate in a panel discussion with these ninth graders, as well as listen to the students' presentations of their projects. It was awe-inspiring to watch current leaders of our community working with future leaders.

BROTHERS

Brothers is a leadership organization and lifelong brotherhood for DECA students and graduates. The group meets once a week after school and is led by DECA Student Support Coordinator and advisor, Mr. William Harper.

Meetings consist of discussions, games, and lessons pertaining to manhood. Brothers is an opportunity for improving leadership skills, gaining loyal friends, connecting with mentors, engaging in community service, and learning how to be a better man.

DECA'S BLOOD DRIVE

Ms. Tracy Martz does a fantastic job training volunteers from her anatomy and physiology class not only in the importance of a blood drive but how to take actionable steps to create a successful one. Each year they host two drives, one in the fall and one in the spring. After the tragic and sudden loss of senior student Tayonna Barnett, Ms. Tracy Martz gave her students a way to process their grief into action. In honor of Tayonna and her generous heart, the spring drive had the theme, "Give like Tayonna".

"When a student comes to DECA, we not only tell them they can be a future college graduate...we expect it of them."

—Charles Bull, Deputy Superintendent



THE SUPPORTER

Seoop

with Dave & Theresa Gasper

- Dave and Theresa Gasper constantly strive to lead DECA scholars and staff towards success by providing meaningful and joyful experiences. In February, the Gaspers brought UD basketball players Nate Santos and Enoch Cheeks to DECA High for an impactful Q & A roundtable discussion with DECA scholar athletes. In addition, many DECA teachers, students, and staff were able to attend the NCAA First Four basketball games in March thanks to a generous gift of tickets, and this past spring, DECA Middle eighth graders traveled to Washington D.C. at a reduced rate thanks to the Gasper's financial support. Mr. Gasper can also be spotted at DECA High mentoring and volunteering almost every week of the school year! Dave and Theresa, thank you for showing our scholars what it means to lead and succeed, and for bringing the DECA Core Value of Find Joy to life for our entire DECA community!



"It is a rare honor to be associated with an organization that works to prove that education truly changes lives."

—Mike McQuiston, Chairman of the DECA Board of Trustees

DECA

OUR KIDS CONTINUE

At DECA, we celebrate the incredible success of our alumni who have gone on to pursue their dreams and realize their full potential. From becoming a prominent news anchor to gaining acceptance into medical and law schools, our former scholars are shining examples of determination and achievement. Some have even returned to DECA, dedicating themselves to helping the next generation succeed. Their journeys inspire us and reaffirm our belief that with the right support and encouragement, our kids can achieve anything they set their minds to.

DECA pushed me, got me out of my comfort zone, created a habit of being organized, and gave me a sense of time management."

—Bobbi Mills, 2013 DECA Grad



MIKE SPURLINO

SPURLINO FAMILY INVESTS IN ALUMNI

Nothing was more important to the late philanthropist Cy Spurlino than education. He agreed with DECA's mission, recognizing that a college degree can put graduates on a trajectory out of poverty. He understood that the cost of college was often solely on the students, many without a family financial safety net. He also wanted to help students from his hometown. Cy and his family, along with Tom and Babs Bettcher, and an increasing number of DECA supporters, provide essential support for the Alumni Scholarship Fund. With this fund, grads can find critical funding—sometimes emergency—to cover gaps that otherwise might cause them to drop out of college. High achieving college students can apply for assistance with books, housing, tuition, and other college-related expenses. DECA's college completion rate has increased thanks to this vital support. For many DECA students, these scholarships are life-changing. DECA is eternally grateful to the Spurlino Family Foundation for recognizing that our work is not done when our scholars leave us, that we must stay with our graduates as they continue to and through college to fully fulfill our mission. Coming full circle, some DECA college grads, grateful for the help they received, have now created their own scholarships to support our future college graduates on their journey towards a degree.



ALUMNI: INDIA RICHARDSON

When did you graduate from DECA? I graduated from DECA in 2019.

Where did you go to college?

I went to the University of Dayton and graduated in 2023 with a nursing degree! I was part of the first nursing cohort!

Where is your life now? What are you doing for your career? I am currently a nurse, and I work at Miami Valley Hospital specializing in Pain Management. My goal in nursing is to be an Aesthetic Nurse Injector. Eventually I want to become a nurse practitioner.

How did DECA impact you then and how does it still impact you today? DECA enabled me to find connections at UD as well as put me in a position to become a leader. While at UD, I served on multiple executive boards and led my community in different ways. I was vice president of our Black student union, BATU, as well as the Corresponding Secretary for my sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated. I'll never forget my experience at DECA. I still have close relationships with some of the staff. The friends I had there are people I now call family.

ALUMNI: SUHAIB ABUDULWAHED

When did you graduate from DECA? I graduated from DECA in 2016.

Where did you go to college and what degree? I graduated with my Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience from The Ohio State University in 2020.

Where are you now? I am currently a first year medical student at Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine, working towards an MD to pursue my dream of practicing medicine.

How did DECA help you? DECA allowed me to gain exposure and follow my goals at a young age. DECA provided me with opportunities to take college courses and complete job shadows and internships that exposed me to my interests. DECA's staff and faculty were always supportive and allowed me to thrive in a great learning environment. At DECA, I learned to connect with staff and to appreciate the guidance they can provide in my current medical studies.



ALUMNI: MONET SCROGGINS

When did you graduate from DECA? I graduated from DECA in 2013.

Where did you go to college?

I received a Bachelor of Arts in Public Affairs - Urban Policy and Management from The Ohio State University and a Master of Education in Education Leadership from Wright State University.

Where is your life now? What are you doing for your career? After five years working in higher education, I now serve as the College Liaison at DECA High School. This has allowed me to combine my love for DECA and my desire to assist students in gaining access to spaces of higher education. My goal is to help as many students as possible get to, and through, college.

What impact did DECA have on your life? DECA empowered me. Participating in programs like Mock Trial, Student Ambassadors, and Peer Mediators helped me find my voice and gain confidence. That coupled with the realization that I excelled in challenging high school and college courses made reaching goals such as earning a college degree and making an impact on my community suddenly seem attainable. DECA exposed me to what felt like a new world outside of the community that I grew up in and prepared me for what was to come.

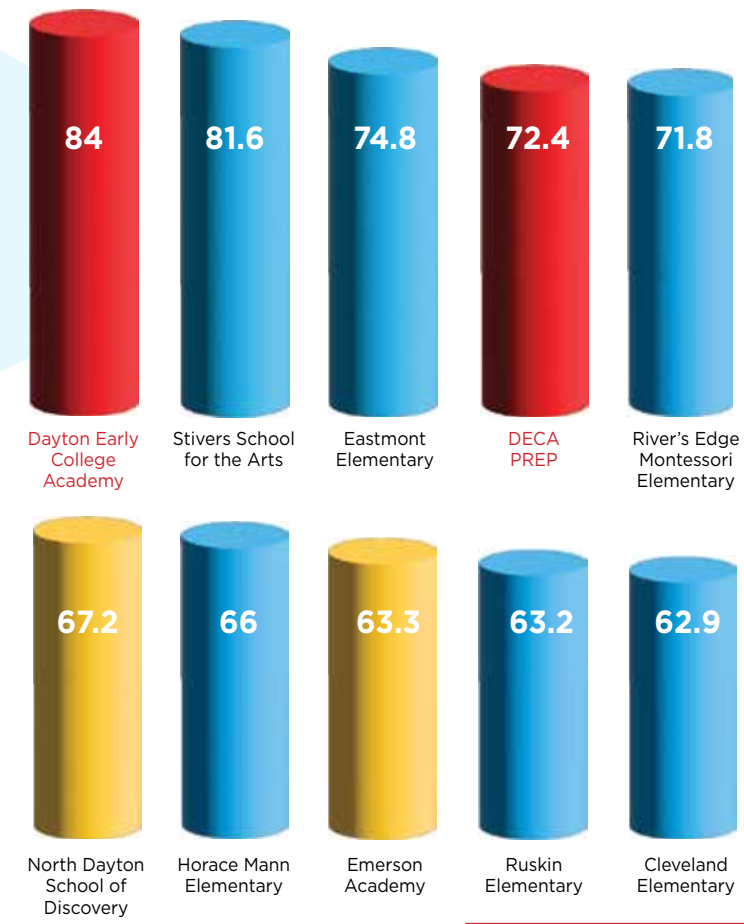
"The Alumni Scholarship Fund is first and foremost about DECA students. They are talented and have great potential, and this fund is designed to help them overcome financial obstacles that can get in the way of achieving a college degree."



OUR KIDS CAN COMPETE!

Both DECA High and DECA PREP exceeded the state's expectations for our students' growth. In fact, the high school's performance was among the very best of the schools in the state and DECA PREP's performance placed it in the top 20% of all of the schools in Ohio—indicating that students at DECA are growing far better than projected by the state.

PERFORMANCE INDEX OF TOP 10 SCHOOLS IN DAYTON
KEY: DECA SCHOOLS CHARTER SCHOOLS DAYTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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MONTGOMERY COUNTY DATA 23-24

Oakwood City 108.2% / Centerville City 95.4% / Northmont City 89% / Vandalia Butler 88.7% /
Dayton Early College Academy 84% / Miamisburg City 83.3% / Mad River 76% / West Carrollton 72.6% /
DECA PREP 72.4% / Huber Heights 72.4% / Dayton City 53.3% / Trotwood Madison 52%

DECA'S OHIO REPORT CARD

STARS

OVERALL RATING
HIGH ★★★★★
PREP ★★★★★

RANKING

VALUE ADDED
HIGH 7/846 (99%)
PREP 153/846 (82%)



“Even when I switched in 2nd grade, I could tell the work was more rigorous. I used to be one of the top of the class in my previous school—but at DECA—all the kids were top of the class.”

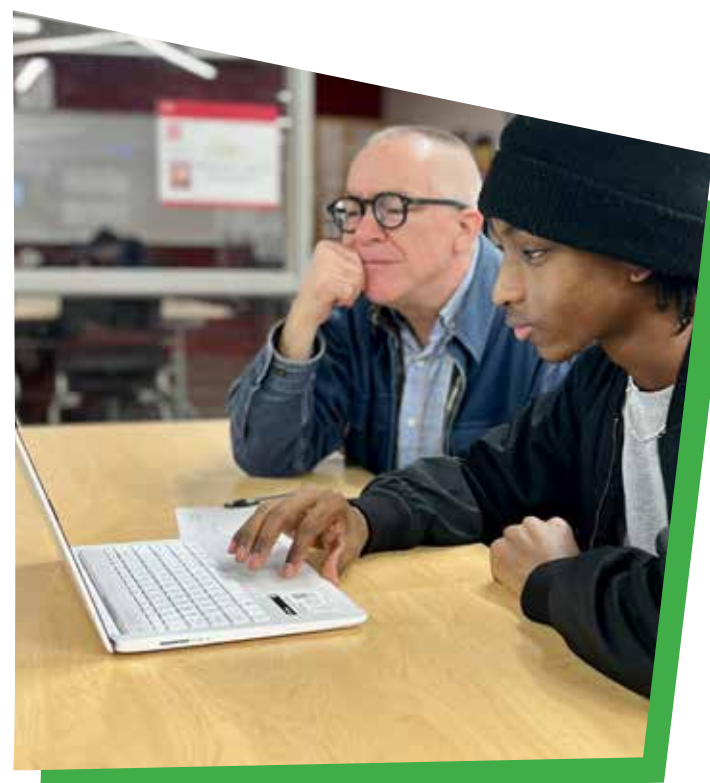
—Jayda Culpepper, Class of 2023



THE SUPPORTER
Seedop

with Steve LeVon

DECA is so fortunate to have a group of volunteers who are always ready and willing to jump in towards helping our students succeed. Steve LeVon, a retired high school teacher, has answered the call for help time and time again. He has been spotted at DECA PREP helping our youngest learners, and he also frequents DECA High to work with our older scholars. Last January, DECA Junior Devin Hill requested a volunteer to help him with his Macroeconomics course at Sinclair. Though many volunteers would be intimidated by college level content, Steve answered the request ready and willing to do what was needed to help Devin pass the course. Steve and Devin met once and sometimes twice a week to review course content and prepare for assignments. Thanks to Steve, Devin finished the class with a B, and is well on his way towards earning an Associate's Degree when he graduates high school!



“DECA equipped me with the tools necessary to be successful in furthering my education post high school.”

—Dioncia Black, Class of 2010



OUR KIDS CAN DO MORE WITH LESS

Before the 2023-2024 fiscal year as a public charter school, DECA received 27% less funding to educate each student compared to our traditional public school peers. Yet, high quality charter schools such as DECA out-perform traditional public schools in our area. Since DECA continues to be top-tier amongst charter schools, the district continues to qualify for Quality Charter School funding.

Thanks to Governor DeWine, Lieutenant Governor Husted, and Ohio’s General Assembly, the state funding to high quality charter schools increased. This continued special funding is essential to us as we re-invest in our teachers’ compensation and in high quality classroom curriculum. Attracting and retaining the best qualified teachers is the first strategy toward improving student achievement.

EXPENSES

DECA remains committed to allocating its money where it’s needed the most: in the classroom and with student support systems. In addition, DECA provides breakfast and lunch to all our students for free—no charge to them or their families. Our continued low “shared services” expenses provides the leadership for quality curriculum and instruction, student and family services, and other support services such as human resources and fiscal support.

OUTLOOK

DECA continues to experience some of its most secure funding positions in our history. We continue to leverage all available resources into a prudent allocation of those resources that focuses on students. Our long-standing finance committee, which consists of some of Dayton’s best business minds, remains active in support of our financial plans to keep DECA stable today and well into the future. DECA continues to create a financial structure focused on students that also promotes short-term agility with long-term sustainability.

ANNUAL LUNCHEON

The Lives Changed Luncheon was a wonderful celebration of twenty years of DECA and a tribute to the community that helps us make it possible. Hearing from students from across the district about the impact that DECA has had on them was inspiring to share with our community. Thank you to everyone who attended and supported this exciting event!

“I am very grateful to have had DECA in my timeline of life. It has given me great joy to literally pour back into this growing community of scholars!”

—Shaylynn Hespeth, Class of 2015,
8th Grade History Teacher at DECA Middle

THE FACTS

OUR
KIDS
CAN!



First Come First Serve



Free to Attend



1300 Students



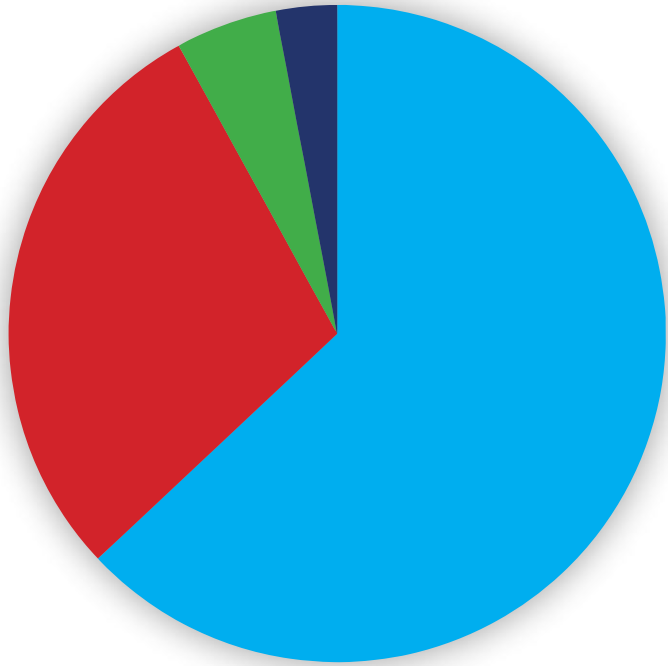
81% First Generation College Student



100% College Acceptance



REVENUE



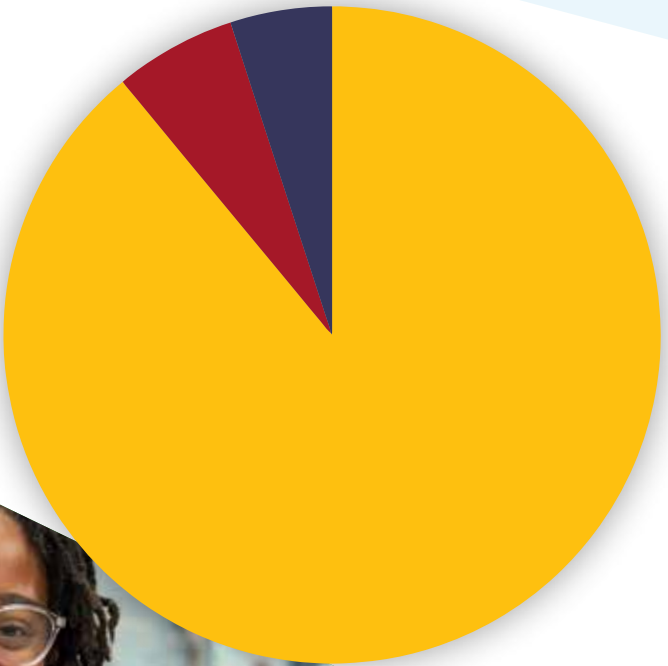
- State Funding 63%
- Federal Grants 29%
- Donations 5%
- Student Nutrition 3%

EXPENSES

- Instruction and Student Support 89%
- Shared Services 6%
- Student Nutrition 5%



Want to learn more?
Scan here





	Dayton	Dayton	DECA Prep -	DECA Prep -
Primary Academic Indicators				
Performance Index (PI)	Meets	3 stars	Does Not Me	2 stars
Value Added (VA)	Exceeds	5 stars	Meets	4 stars
Gap Closing	Exceeds	4 stars	Exceeds	4 stars
Graduation Rate (4 years)	Meets	94.5%		
Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers			Falls Far Belo	57.3%
Performance v. Local Market (PI)	Exceeds	Top 20	Exceeds	Top 20
Performance v. Local Market (VA)	Exceeds	Top 20	Exceeds	Top 20
Performance v. Statewide Charters (PI)	Exceeds	Top 20	Exceeds	Top 20
Performance v. Statewide Charters (VA)	Exceeds	Top 20	Meets	Top 30
Financial Measures of Success (Current Year)				
Ratio of Assets to Liabilities	Exceeds	11.07 ratio	Exceeds	13.53 ratio
Days Cash	Exceeds	177.98 days	Exceeds	189.91 days
Current year enrollment variance	Exceeds	95.99%	Exceeds	100.21%
Financial Measures of Success (Prior Years)				
Multi-year Ration of Assets to Liabilities	Exceeds	11.90 ratio	Exceeds	3.67 ratio &
Cash Flow	Exceeds	CF positive	Meets	CF positive
Operations/Governance Primary Indicators				
Records Compliance	Exceeds	98%	Exceeds	98%
Special Education Performance Determination (most recent annual)	Exceeds	4.00	Exceeds	4.00

