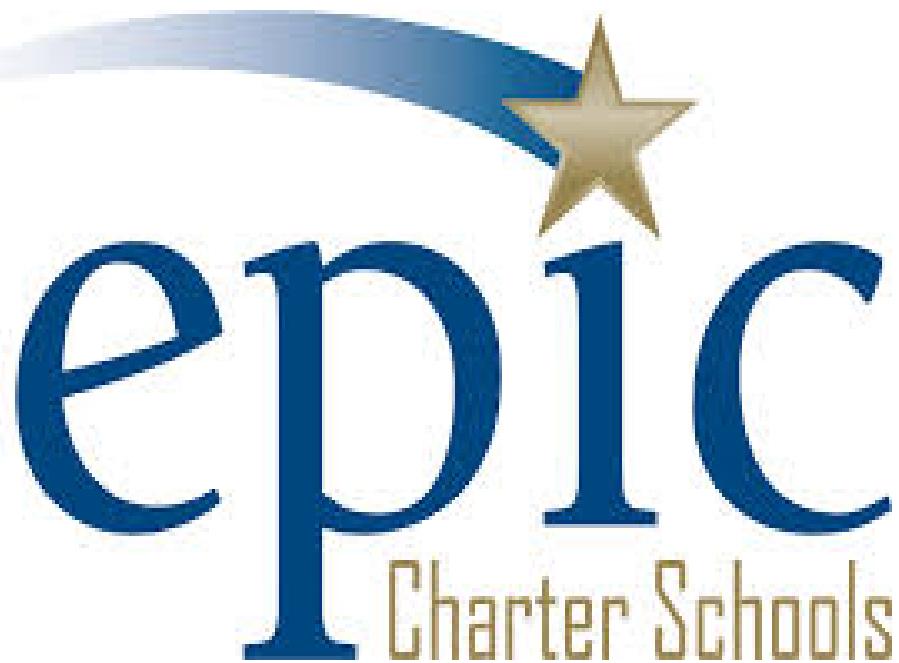


Oklahoma
School Performance Review



**Fulfilling Every Student's
Individual Potential...**

Office of Educational Quality & Accountability

November 2016



OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

November, 2016

Fellow Oklahomans:

The Office of Educational Quality & Accountability is pleased to present the Epic Charter Schools Performance Review upon the request of the Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board (SVCSB).

Epic Charter Schools (ECS) has a number of impressive programs; however, similar to the brick and mortar schools, ECS is also faced with challenges. The review contains recommendations to help ECS meet those challenges and to improve the efficiency of their operations. The review also highlights a number of “Commendable Practices” in programs, operations, and services provided by the administration, teachers, and staff.

We are grateful for the cooperation of ECS board, administration, staff, parents, and students for their input into this review. The administration and staff are also to be commended for their dedication toward improving educational opportunities for all students.

We are pleased to announce that this review is available in hardcopy through the Office of Educational Quality & Accountability and on the office’s web site at www.oeqa.ok.gov

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Daniel Craig".

Dr. Daniel Craig
Executive Director

Oklahoma School Performance Review

Epic Charter Schools November 2016



Commission for Educational Quality & Accountability

Secretary of Education Natalie Shirley, Chairman

Amy Bixler

Douglas Brown

Bruce Day

Dr. Bo Hannaford

Johnnie Parks

Dr. Kent Shellenberger

Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Dr. Daniel Craig - Executive Director

Robert Buswell - Director of Educational Accountability

Jerry Hsieh - Senior Database Design Analyst

Dr. Kathren Stehno - Senior Coordinator for School Improvement

Jeff Wallace - Assistant Director for Educational Accountability

Authors

Dr. Kathren Stehno – Project Manager

Dr. Daniel Craig & Dr. Jim Hawkins – Chapter 1 – Personnel, Management, & Communications

Dr. Kathren Stehno – Chapter 2 – Instructional Delivery

Dr. Daniel Craig & Dr. Sherry Labyer – Chapter 3 - Business Operations

Robert Buswell – Chapter 4 - Facilities Use Management & Safety and Security

A2Z Computer Solutions – Chapter 5 - Technology

This publication was prepared by the Office of Educational Quality & Accountability as authorized by Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes, Section 3-118.1 and 1210.5331. It was printed by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Central Services Department, as authorized by the Commission of Educational Quality & Accountability. 10 paper copies have been prepared at a cost of \$641.85. A copy has been electronically deposited with the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, November 2016.



Office of Educational Quality and Accountability
www.oeqa.ok.gov

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability supports high level student performance by ensuring quality evidence-based educator preparation, improving P20 school efficiency and effectiveness, and providing comprehensive statistical information for all stakeholders.



www.oklahomaworks.gov

Building Oklahoma's Workforce
Oklahoma Works brings all of our state's workforce resources together, connecting employers, employees and job-seekers to information and programs that help build Oklahoma's workforce.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Acknowledgements	1
Epic Charter Schools	1
Commendations	3
Recommendations and Projected Costs and Savings	6

Chapter 1: Management, Personnel, and Communications

A. Organization & Management	1-3
B. Planning & Evaluation	1-7
C. Personnel Management/Professional Development	1-9
D. Communications & Parent Involvement	1-13

Chapter 2: Instructional Delivery

A. Professional Learning Community	2-1
B. Curriculum	2-11
C. Instructional Delivery	2-18
D. Student Performance & Data Analysis	2-35
E. Special Programs	2-50
F. Student Services	2-55

Chapter 3: Business Operations

A. Planning and Budgeting/Financial Processes	3-5
B. Purchasing	3-8
C. Asset and Risk Management	3-9

Chapter 4: Facilities Use and Management

A. Facilities Planning and Construction	4-3
B. Maintenance and Custodial Operations	4-6
C. Energy Management	4-9
D. Safety & Security	4-13

Chapter 5: Technology	5-1
A. Introduction & Background	5-1
B. Policies, Procedures, & Planning	5-3
C. Infrastructure, Software, Hardware, & Operations	5-4
D. Technology Acquisition Practices	5-10

Appendices:

A. Staff Survey Results	A-1
B. Parent Survey Results	B-1
C. Student Survey Results	C-1
D. Resources for Chapter 2	D-1

Executive Summary

The Oklahoma School Performance Review (OSPR) Program was authorized by the Oklahoma Legislature during the 2001 session, amended during the 2005 session, and amended again during the 2012 session. The responsibility to conduct school performance reviews was originally assigned to the Office of Accountability, which is now the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (OEQA). The purpose of a performance review is to develop findings, commendations, and recommendations for school districts regarding (1) containing costs; (2) improving management strategies; and (3) promoting better education for Oklahoma children.

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability began the performance review of Epic Charter Schools (ECS) in May 2016. OEQAs in-house consultants conducted the review upon the request of the Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board (SVCSB). The consulting team conducted individual interviews and focus groups with school personnel and board members. The team also reviewed operations by touring facilities. The administrator, teachers, support staff, parents, and high school students completed confidential surveys. The consulting team tabulated the surveys and used the results in this review. Survey results are contained in **Appendices A through C**.

OEQA selected three Oklahoma school districts as peers based upon size, demographics, and other similar variables for comparative purposes. Those districts are: Enid, Muskogee, and Ponca City Public Schools. These peer districts are found only in chapter two. For chapter three OEQAs selected three virtual charters as peers for fiscal comparative purposes. For further comparison, the state average was also used in both chapters.

During this review, the consulting team developed 30 recommendations designed to improve operations and support increased academic performance at ECS. In some cases, these recommendations should result in a net savings to the district, in some cases a net cost, and in other cases they should have no fiscal impact, but should improve district effectiveness. A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 3**.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability wishes to express their appreciation to the Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board and its Executive Director, Dr. Rebecca Wilkinson, for the opportunity to provide a performance review of Epic Charter Schools. OEQAs also, wishes to recognize David Chaney, Superintendent of ECS, and his staff for their hospitality during our onsite visit and their gracious cooperation during the entire process of this review.

EPIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

ECS serves prekindergarten (PK) to twelfth grade students and offers an individualized, online curriculum. ECS is designed, organized, and governed to provide a unique opportunity for students and parents to work together educationally while realizing each student's individual



potential. The goal of the school is to work in partnership with students and parents to ensure each child's success.

ECS is sponsored by the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board (SVCSB). Composed of five appointed members, the SVCSB is the sole authority to authorize and sponsor full-time statewide virtual charter schools in Oklahoma. The SVCSB may retain up to five percent of a virtual charter school's state aid allocation for administrative expenses. Previously, ECS was sponsored by Graham-Dustin Public Schools, however, due to changes in Oklahoma Statute, ECS was brought under the sponsorship of the SVCSB.

The attendance boundaries of ECS are the borders of the State of Oklahoma. In other words, any student resident of Oklahoma is eligible to attend ECS. ECS is free to all Oklahoma students. One caveat, however, is that students enrolled in statewide virtual charter schools cannot participate in any activities administered by the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association (OSSAA).

Current Demographics

Exhibit 1 shows the ECS student enrollment and demographic data for school year 2015-16. The school is divided into three sites for reporting purposes. Because the PK-5 and 9-12 sites have the most grades, they also have the most students enrolled. The data below show that the majority of ECS students are identified as Caucasian.

Exhibit 1
ECS Student Enrollment & Demographics
2015-16

School	Grade Span	Fall Enrollment	Caucasian	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Native American
Elementary	PK-5	2,064	66%	10%	2%	10%	12%
Middle	6-8	1,338	65%	8%	1%	10%	15%
High	9-12	2,635	65%	8%	1%	10%	16%
Total		6,037	65%	9%	1%	10%	14%

Source: Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, Profiles Database

Exhibit 2 shows the Average Daily Membership (ADM) and demographic breakdown by school year for ECS. ECS has experienced an increase in ADM each year since school year 2011-12. Demographic data are fairly consistent from year to year. Though school year 2016-17 data are not available at the time of this review, projections indicated the growth in ADM would continue.

Exhibit 2
ECS ADM and Demographics
2011-12 to 2015-16

School Year	ADM	Ethnic Group				
		Caucasian	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Native American
2011-12	1,517.7	64%	3%	1%	5%	15%
2012-13	1,884.9	66%	12%	1%	7%	8%
2013-14	2,519.2	70%	9%	1%	6%	9%
2014-15	3,906.9	68%	10%	1%	5%	15%
2015-16	5,631.4	65%	9%	1%	10%	14%

Source: Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, Profiles Database

COMMENDATIONS

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability identified “exemplary” or “best practices” in Epic Charter Schools that led to 35 separate commendations. OEQA recommends that other school districts and/or virtual charters throughout Oklahoma examine these exemplary programs and services to see if they could be adapted to meet their local needs. The commendations are listed below and explained in detail in each chapter.

Chapter 1: MANAGEMENT, PERSONNEL, AND COMMUNICATIONS

The ECS mission statement is well-understood, communicated, and revised with stakeholder input.

The ECS organizational and reporting structures are well-understood and communicated to staff members.

ECS professional development is effective and efficient with numerous options and high staff participation.

ECS administration’s communication with staff is effective and shows the importance placed on this effort by the school.

Chapter 2: INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY SYSTEM

The ECS staff understands the value of a professional learning community for continuous school improvement.

ECS central administration is commended for conducting consistent collaborative meetings focused on data that propels constant conversation among all stakeholders.

ECS administration is commended for implementing professional development opportunities that will build teacher capacity for implementing effective instructional strategies in a blended environment.



ECS is commended for providing students with multiple curriculum paths and supports that allow flexibility for student success.

ECS is commended for providing and implementing vertical curriculum alignment documents that ensure student preparation for the next grade level.

ECS is commended for providing excellent instructional leaders to guide the district's ongoing commitment toward student success and school improvement.

ECS is commended for implementing policies that contribute to a principal's development in the area of instructional leadership.

ECS staff is commended for employing promising instructional delivery strategies in an online learning environment.

ECS is commended for providing several instructional delivery options to engage students in their online learning, specifically with Epic's unique 1-on-1 model (student to teacher) face-to-face interactions.

ECS is commended for an instructional delivery program that a majority of students perceive as contributing to their development on six of seven outcomes.

ECS is meeting individual student interests by emphasizing and integrating the use of technology tools into the instructional delivery process.

ECS implements procedures and communicates expectations to ensure all teaching staff understands the important role assessments must have in the teaching and learning cycle and includes the application of both formative and summative assessments.

ECS teachers and leaders possess the capacity for collecting and analyzing student data to design instruction and remediation and to ensure that there is consistent implementation using a system-wide process.

ECS leadership and faculty are commended for their efforts in developing a system focused on continuous improvement, which has increased student performance results on the ACT over time.

ECS leadership is commended for their efforts in developing and implementing actionable strategies to improve students' math performance.

ECS special education staff is commended for providing special education students with a program that has instilled a growing confidence from parents and colleagues within the district.

ECS is commended for adding an extra layer of support with the graduate management support system in an effort to ensure students are on track and on time for graduation.

Chapter 3: BUSINESS OPERATIONS

ECS provides direct deposit for its employees, and all staff participates.

ECS has clear purchasing procedures, which are followed by pertinent staff.

ECS maintains accurate and detailed inventory lists of equipment, laptop computers, and related hardware.

Chapter 4: FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

The testing and special education center in Oklahoma City is a good example of both adaptive reuse and facility sharing.

The landlord's property management company does employ some components of an energy management program (EMP) such as set-back thermostats and dual-flush toilets.

All of the emergency egress lights in the administration building for Epic Charter Schools properly switched to battery back-up and illuminated when they were tested.

Security at the entrances to all of Epic Charter Schools' facilities is commendable with a camera, speaker and electro-magnetic lock activated by a chipped key fob being in use to prevent unwanted access to building occupants and contents.

Epic Charter Schools is commended for clearly stating in their employee handbook that all student-teacher contact should be documented and that teachers should never meet with a student face-to-face alone.

Chapter 5: TECHNOLOGY

ECS is commended for contracting with a qualified company to provide a level of service and support that ensures that the school's primary concern of educating students will not be interrupted in the event of a disaster.

ECS has contracted with a reputable company that has a low staff turnover rate. This has allowed Beasley to provide excellent customer service and to respond to the school's changing needs in a timely fashion.

Standardizing on one platform of software has kept costs down and made installing software very simple because all Google products are web-based.

ECS is commended for providing an efficient and effective communication system that can be managed by a single staff person.

ECS's use of a large third-party student records management service provider that holds all information needed for all shareholders is strategic and forward thinking.

ECS is able to extend the useful life of laptops and hardware by providing quality maintenance and by finding alternate uses after the unit is too old for student/teacher use.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTED COSTS AND SAVINGS

A list of recommendations with their associated costs or savings is provided in **Exhibit 3**. In each chapter, implementation strategies and the estimates of fiscal impact follow each recommendation in this report. The implementation section associated with each recommendation highlights the actions necessary to achieve the proposed results. Many of the recommendations have no costs or savings associated with them, but are designed to formalize, improve, and streamline operations. In some cases, the consulting team has made recommendations that will likely generate savings for the district, but in an effort to be conservative, no specific savings were estimated.

It must be understood that not all of the recommendations can be started at one time. The consulting team did not want to establish priorities by indicating which recommendations should be implemented immediately and which ones should be implemented later. It will be up to the district to decide which recommendations to implement and the timelines for beginning their implementation.

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability recommends that the ECS Board ask the Superintendent and administrative staff to review the recommendations, develop an implementation plan, and monitor its progress.

Exhibit 3
Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation

	Recommendation	Estimated (Costs) or Savings					Total Five-Year (Costs) or Savings
		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
Chapter 1	Management, Personnel, and Communications						
1	Develop a strategic planning process that leads to a long-range strategic/growth plan.						\$0
2	Using stakeholder input, create more opportunities for students to work together on activities, projects, events, and lessons.						\$0
	Subtotal – 1						\$0
Chapter 2	Instructional Delivery System						
3	ECS leaders should formalize the PLC collaboration process by incorporating supportive structures and tools to drive improvement of student achievement and contribute to the professional growth of teachers.						\$0
4	Enrich the current mentoring/coaching program ensuring all staff (mentor/ mentees) is aware of its existence and that it is consistently implemented throughout the initial year or as needed in the second year of employment.						\$0
5	Review current processes that are in place for curriculum implementation and determine what procedures need to be added that will enrich the process thus increasing parent satisfaction and teacher capacity.						\$0
6	Update all grade level/content specific pacing calendars that reflect standards taught quarterly; include (DoK) levels and blue print assessment information; while ensuring all staff members are thoroughly acquainted with these documents.						\$0
7	The Superintendent and second tier administrative staff should draft a strategic and focused leadership staffing plan to ensure supportive structures are in place that promotes consistency and assurance during periods of exponential growth.						\$0
8	ECS faculty should employ the use of technology tools for facilitating collaborative project opportunities, which will enhance student engagement and development of college and career readiness skills.						\$0
9	Review current strategies using collected data from this review to revise and strengthen the math program while simultaneously						\$0



	Recommendation	Estimated (Costs) or Savings					Total Five-Year (Costs) or Savings
		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
	increasing professional development and PLC collaborative face-to-face time focused on the new math standards and their execution.						
10	ECS leadership must make a point to request that all assessment reports formulated for diagnostic purposes provide the most detailed and disaggregated data set which would include separate listings for FAY Regular Education, NFAY Regular Education, FAY Special Education and NFAY Special Education.						\$0
11	Significantly increase staff, parents, and students' awareness of the online Counselor's Corner; then conduct an analysis of counseling needs to ensure the website addresses those needs.						\$0
12	Continue with the extra support that the graduate support management program provides, but hire an additional GSM to ensure an equitable ratio of 400 to 450:1 at each grade level in high school.	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$180,000)
	Subtotal – 2	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$180,000)
Chapter 3	Business Operations						
13	Include greater stakeholder input in and communication regarding the budgetary process annually.						\$0
14	Develop a policy to invest funds in certificates of deposit and government-backed bonds.						\$0
	Subtotal – 3						\$0
Chapter 4	Facilities Use and Management						
15	The governing board of Epic Charter Schools, Community Strategies, Inc., should be more involved and engaged in the strategic master planning efforts for the school, and additional stakeholder groups should also be included in the strategic master planning process.						\$0
16	Outline landlord/property management company liaison duties and assign them to an administrative staff member in order to better maintain building safety.						\$0
17	As was the case for maintaining building safety, ECS should include some basic energy management duties in the job description for the accounts payable clerk or whatever administrative staff member takes on the landlord/property management company liaison duties.						\$0

	Recommendation	Estimated (Costs) or Savings					Total Five-Year (Costs) or Savings
		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
18	Contact the landlord or property management company and request that an inspection is made of the ECS administration building's fire sprinkler system. Make sure the inspection includes the riser for the system and be sure to secure a copy of the inspection report for ECS records.						\$0
19	Contact the landlord or property management company and request that an annual inspection is made of the ECS administration building's hand-held fire extinguishers. Also, request that the landlord assign a capable maintenance person to make monthly inspections of the hand-held fire extinguishers and initial the inspection ticket accordingly. Finally, be sure to secure a copy of the annual inspection report for the ECS records.						\$0
20	Contact the landlord or property management company and request that an inspection be made of the ECS administration building's emergency egress plan that would include interior exit signage and exterior door hardware						\$0
21	ECS administration should ensure that emergency evacuation diagrams include all of the basic elements and are posted in offices and in the employee handbook.						
22	Form a working group comprised of administrators and teachers with the purpose of reviewing and then rewriting Epic Charter Schools – Employee Handbook.						\$0
23	Form a working group comprised of administrators and teachers with the purpose of reviewing and then rewriting Epic Charter Schools – Student / Parent Handbook.						\$0
Subtotal - 4							\$0
Chapter 5	Support Services – Technology						
24	ECS work groups should produce a timeline for the universal use of Chromebooks and the phase-out of IPads and laptops in the next two to four years.						\$0
25	Review all support calls and create a troubleshooting guide that is simple enough for teachers or students to use before contacting Beasley for support.						\$0
26	Beasley should collect information from students living in rural areas of western and eastern Oklahoma to determine the best service provider and means of connection for the students.						\$0
27	ECS should establish a written policy that requires all copier hard						\$0



	Recommendation	Estimated (Costs) or Savings					Total Five-Year (Costs) or Savings
		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
	drives be removed and destroyed or wiped clean before leaving the building.						
28	ECS should hire an Application Program Interface (API) expert to write “Software BOTS” for automatic loading of student curriculum into the Epicenter database plus the uploading of data into outside student learning modules.	(\$2,325)	(\$300)	(\$300)	(\$300)	(\$300)	(\$3,525)
29	Internet speeds and network speeds should be increased at the main location to improve Google Hangouts interactions and allow more teachers access to the ECS site.	(\$3,042)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$3,042)
30	ECS should contract with a third party consultant that specializes in completing E-Rate applications for schools to ensure that the school receives the highest level of funding.	(\$2,000)	(\$2,200)	(\$2,420)	(\$2,662)	(\$2,928)	(\$12,210)
31	Form a work group to develop and complete a technology acquisition planning template that could be used to project each year’s need for new laptops, Chromebooks, wireless access points, etc.						
	Subtotal – 5	(\$7,367)	(\$2,500)	(\$2,720)	(\$2,962)	(\$3,228)	(\$18,777)
	Total savings						
	Total costs	(\$43,367)	(\$38,500)	(\$38,720)	(\$38,962)	(\$39,228)	(\$198,777)
	Total net savings and costs	(\$43,367)	(\$38,500)	(\$38,720)	(\$38,962)	(\$39,228)	(\$198,777)

School Performance Review reports are typically lengthy and densely packed with information. They can at first be overwhelming to district stakeholders. For that reason, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability has identified a list of suggested “Top Ten” recommendations. These are recommendations that the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability believes are the most important to implement and most likely to have the greatest organizational impact.

Of the 30 recommendations made, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability believes these ten recommendations to be the most critical:

- **Chapter One:** Develop a strategic planning process that leads to a long-range strategic/growth plan
- **Chapter Two:** Review current processes that are in place for curriculum implementation and determine what procedures need to be added that will enrich the process thus increasing parent satisfaction and teacher capacity.
- **Chapter Two:** Update all grade level/content specific pacing calendars that reflect standards taught quarterly; include (DoK) levels and blue print assessment information; while ensuring all staff members are thoroughly acquainted with these documents.
- **Chapter Two:** Review current strategies using collected data from this review to revise and strengthen the math program while simultaneously increasing professional development and PLC collaborative face-to-face time focused on the new math standards and their execution.
- **Chapter Two:** Significantly increase staff, parents, and students’ awareness of the online Counselor’s Corner; then conduct an analysis of counseling needs to ensure the website addresses those needs.
- **Chapter Three:** Include greater stakeholder input in and communication regarding the budgetary process annually.
- **Chapter Four:** Contact the landlord or property management company and request that an inspection is made of the ECS administration building’s fire sprinkler system. Make sure the inspection includes the riser for the system and be sure to secure a copy of the inspection report for ECS records.
- **Chapter Four:** Form a working group comprised of administrators and teachers with the purpose of reviewing and then rewriting Epic Charter Schools – Student / Parent Handbook.
- **Chapter Five:** Review all support calls and create a troubleshooting guide that is simple enough for teachers or students to use before contacting Beasley for support.
- **Chapter Five:** ECS should contract with a third party consultant that specializes in completing E-Rate applications for schools to ensure that the school receives the highest level of funding



Chapter 1:

***Management, Personnel, and
Communications***

Chapter 1

Management, Personnel, and Communications

This chapter addresses the management, personnel, and communications of Epic Charter Schools (ECS) in the following sections:

- A. Organization and Management
- B. Planning and Evaluation
- C. Personnel Management/Professional Development
- D. Communication and Parental Involvement

Background

ECS serves prekindergarten (PK) to twelfth grade students and offers an individualized, online curriculum. ECS is designed, organized, and governed to provide a unique opportunity for students and parents to work together educationally while realizing each student's individual potential. The goal of the school is to work in partnership with students and parents to ensure each child's success.

ECS is sponsored by the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board (SVCSB). Composed of five appointed members, the SVCSB is the sole authority to authorize and sponsor full-time statewide virtual charter schools in Oklahoma. Per Title 70 O.S. § 3-145.3, the SVCSB, shall "provide oversight of the operations of statewide virtual charter schools..." The SVCSB may retain up to five percent of a virtual charter school's state aid allocation for administrative expenses. There were changes to Oklahoma Statute, which brought ECS under the sponsorship of the SVCSB. Previously, ECS was sponsored by Graham-Dustin Public Schools.

The attendance boundaries of ECS are the borders of the State of Oklahoma. In other words, any student resident of Oklahoma is eligible to attend ECS. Title 70 O.S. § 3-135 states, "The [charter school] contract shall incorporate the provisions of the charter of the charter school and contain...the following provisions...Procedures that require students enrolled in the charter school to be selected by lottery to ensure fairness if more students apply than a school has the capacity to accommodate." Title 70 O.S. § 3-140 states, "A sponsor of a charter school shall not restrict the number of students a charter school may enroll." ECS has not thus far limited enrollment. Unlike other virtual charter schools, ECS continues to enroll students throughout the school year.

ECS is free to all Oklahoma students. Title 70 O.S. § 3-135 states, "The [charter school] contract shall...contain... Policies that require that the charter school be as equally free and open to all students as traditional public schools." Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 further states, "A charter school may not charge tuition or fees." One caveat, however, is that students enrolled in statewide virtual charter schools cannot participate in any activities administered by the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association (OSSAA).



School Philosophy, Mission, and Vision

The philosophy of ECS is simple. The school believes in parental choice. This virtual charter school believes it offers the finest curriculum choices available for grades PK to 12. Furthermore, ECS believes that not all students learn the same way, and the educational options offered allow students to learn anytime and from anywhere in Oklahoma at their own pace.

The mission statement of ECS is, “Fulfilling every student’s individual potential by personalizing an educational plan that focuses on creating a dynamic school and family partnership to achieve optimal student performance.”

The ECS vision is dedicated to providing every student with the opportunity to meet his or her full academic achievement potential. The virtual charter is committed to reaching this vision by:

- Offering the finest quality of instructional strategies and curriculum choices.
- Continuously using assessment to improve delivery of instruction.
- Treating students and families with respect and having high expectations for achievement.
- Using current research and resources to be most effective.

Enrollment, Demographics, and Average Daily Membership Growth

Exhibit 1-1 shows the ECS student enrollment and demographic data for school year 2015-16. The school is divided into three sites for reporting purposes. Because the PK-5 and 9-12 sites have the most grades, they also have the most students enrolled. The data below show that the majority of ECS students are identified as Caucasian.

Exhibit 1-1
ECS Student Enrollment
2015-16

School	Grade Span	Fall Enrollment	Caucasian	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Native American
Elementary	PK-5	2,064	66%	10%	2%	10%	12%
Middle	6-8	1,338	65%	8%	1%	10%	15%
High	9-12	2,635	65%	8%	1%	10%	16%
Total		6,037	65%	9%	1%	10%	14%

Source: OEQA, Profiles Database

Exhibit 1-2 shows the Average Daily Membership (ADM) and demographic breakdown by school year for ECS. ECS has experienced an increase in ADM each year since school year 2011-12. Demographic data are fairly consistent from year to year. Though school year 2016-17 data are not available at the time of this review, projections indicated the growth in ADM would continue.

Exhibit 1-2
ECS ADM and Demographics
2011-12 to 2015-16

School Year	ADM	Ethnic Group				
		Caucasian	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Native American
2011-12	1,517.7	64%	3%	1%	5%	15%
2012-13	1,884.9	66%	12%	1%	7%	8%
2013-14	2,519.2	70%	9%	1%	6%	9%
2014-15	3,906.9	68%	10%	1%	5%	15%
2015-16	5,631.4	65%	9%	1%	10%	14%

*Source: OEQA, Profiles Database;
 2011-12 through 2013-14 EPIC was sponsored by Graham-Dustin Public Schools*

Exhibit 1-3 shows the number of certified staff employed by ECS from school year 2011-12 to 2014-15. As ECS experienced an increase in ADM each year since school year 2011-12, the number of certified staff employed has also increased. Though school year 2016-17 data are not available at the time of this review, projections indicated the growth in staff would also continue.

Exhibit 1-3
Number of Certified Staff
2011-12 to 2014-15

School Year	Certified Staff
2011-2012	76
2012-2013	87
2013-2014	125
2014-2015	366

*Source: OEQA, Profiles Database;
 2011-12 through 2013-14 EPIC was sponsored by Graham-Dustin Public Schools*

A. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Title 70 O.S. § 3-135 states, “The [charter school] contract shall...contain...the following provisions...Management and administration of the charter school, including that a majority of the charter governing board members are residents of the State of Oklahoma and meet no less than quarterly in a public meeting within the boundaries of the school district in which the charter school is located or within the State of Oklahoma in the instance of multiple charter school locations by the same sponsor.” This title and section further states, “A charter school



shall comply with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act...The governing body of a charter school shall be subject to the same conflict of interest requirements as a member of a local school board.” Since the boundaries of the ECS are the borders of the State of Oklahoma, its governing board meetings must be held in Oklahoma.

The ECS governing board consists of five members, who are all residents of Oklahoma. A review of documents showed that ECS scheduled four governing board meetings in calendar year 2016. These meetings were held in Oklahoma City. In accordance with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, the meeting schedule was filed with the Oklahoma County Clerk, and meeting minutes were kept. The most current board members and positions are shown below in **Exhibit 1-4**.

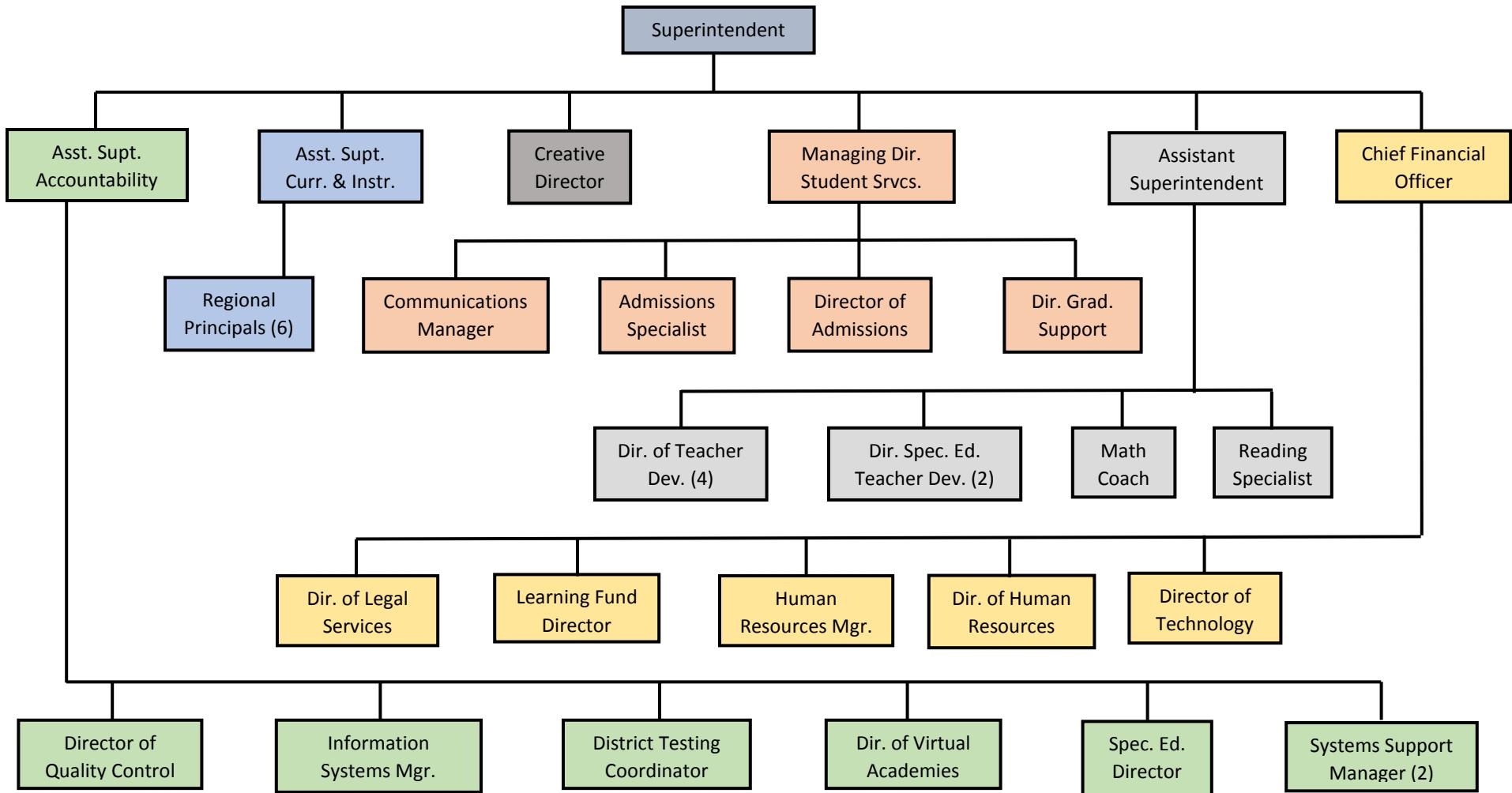
Exhibit 1-4
ECS Governing Board Members
2015-16

Name	Position	State of Residence
Mr. Doug Scott	Chairman	Oklahoma
Ms. Betsy Brown	Secretary	Oklahoma
Mr. Travis Burkett	Director	Oklahoma
Mr. Mike Cantrell	Director	Oklahoma
Ms. Liberty Mitchell	Director	Oklahoma

Source: ECS Files

ECS has an organizational structure similar to any large public school. The school is led by a superintendent, who oversees three assistant superintendents, one Director of Student Services, one Chief Financial Officer, and one Creative Director. Six principals are assigned regions of the State of Oklahoma and answer to one assistant superintendent. Various other directors answer to the other assistant superintendents, Chief Financial Officer, and Director of Student Services. **Exhibit 1-5** below shows the organizational chart for ECS at the time of the review.

Exhibit 1-5
Epic Charter Schools Organization Chart



The ECS governing board maintains a management contract with Epic Youth Services, LLC (EYS). Many charter schools around the nation contract with a charter management organization to handle the administration, budget, personnel, and day-to-day operations of the schools. This is the case with ECS and EYS. The contract, dated July 2014, states, “EYS shall be responsible and accountable to the BOARD for the administration, operation, and performance of the Charter School in accordance with the Charter and this Agreement.”

FINDING 1-1

ECS staff and parents believe the school’s mission is focused on student success. These stakeholders also believe the mission is reviewed and revised with stakeholder input. **Exhibit 1-6** below shows the responses from 128 ECS staff regarding the school’s mission statement. A majority of the respondents agreed with the statements, “Our district’s mission statement is clearly focused on student success” and “Our district’s mission statement is formally reviewed and revised with involvement from stakeholders.”

Exhibit 1-6 **ECS Staff Survey Results Regarding the ECS Mission**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our district’s mission statement is clearly focused on student success.	70%	27%	3%	1%	0%
Our district’s mission statement is formally reviewed and revised with involvement from stakeholders.	33%	37%	27%	3%	1%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

Exhibit 1-7 shows the responses from 351 ECS parents. A majority of the respondents agreed with the statements, “Our Virtual Charter School’s mission statement is clearly focused on student success” and “Our school’s mission statement is formally reviewed and revised with involvement from parents.” These staff and parent survey results indicate that the school’s mission statement is well-understood, communicated, and revised with stakeholder input.

Exhibit 1-7 **ECS Parent Survey Results Regarding the ECS Mission**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our Virtual Charter School’s mission statement is clearly focused on student success.	49%	39%	12%	1%	0%
Our school’s mission statement is formally reviewed and revised with involvement from parents.	30%	36%	30%	4%	0%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

COMMENDATION

The ECS mission statement is well-understood, communicated, and revised with stakeholder input.

FINDING 1-2

ECS staff understands the school's organizational and reporting structures regarding job functions. **Exhibit 1-8** below shows the responses from 128 ECS staff regarding the school's organizational and reporting structures. A majority of the respondents agreed with the statements, "I understand the district's organizational structure" and "I know to whom I report for all my job functions." Taken together, these results show that the organizational and reporting structures are well-understood and communicated to school staff.

Exhibit 1-8
ECS Staff Survey Results Regarding
Organizational and Reporting Structures

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I understand the district's organizational structure.	51%	38%	7%	3%	0%
I know to whom I report for all my job functions.	68%	27%	3%	1%	0%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

COMMENDATION

The ECS organizational and reporting structures are well-understood and communicated to staff members.

B. PLANNING AND EVALUATION

To be effective, a strategic plan must lay out key milestones to measure progress, establish a priority ordering of the items to be accomplished, provide a timeline for which each item is to be accomplished, and assign accountability for each item to a specified position in the school district organization. Finally, the organization must provide periodic reports on the status of the plan's implementation and any changes that must be made due to unforeseen circumstances or changes in assumptions.

According to Cook (2000), strategic planning requires total concentration of the organization's resources on mutually pre-determined measurable outcomes.¹ Strategic planning allows an organization to have a clear focus on what it is doing and what it intends to do based upon established and monitored goals. A strategic plan will include long-term goals, which typically

¹ Cook, Jr., W. (2000). *Strategics: The art and science of holistic strategy*. Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books.



can be achieved in five to ten years. Short-term goals, which typically can be achieved in a year, support the attainment of the long-term goals.

All too often, organizations develop strategic plans that are broad statements with no ties to specific goals. For example, a school district may establish a goal of “improving student performance” without setting a target or identifying the strategies it plans to employ to achieve the desired outcome, or even fully defining “student performance.” A better goal would be “improving student achievement by 10 percent from last year to this year as measured by state standardized testing.” The district would then identify the means by which this goal would be achieved, such as through additional small group instruction with benchmark testing to monitor progress.

According to the Balanced Scorecard Institute:

There are many different frameworks and methodologies for strategic planning and management. While there are no absolute rules regarding the right framework, most follow a similar pattern and have common attributes. Many frameworks cycle through some variation of the following basic phases:

1. analysis or assessment, where an understanding of the current internal and external environments is developed;
2. strategy formulation, where high level strategy is developed and a basic organization level strategic plan is documented;
3. strategy execution, where the high level plan is translated into more operational planning and action items; and
4. evaluation or sustainment/management phase, where ongoing refinement and evaluation of performance, culture, communications, data reporting, and other strategic management issues occurs.²

FINDING 1-3

Though planning has taken place, ECS does not have a formal long-term strategic planning process. As shown throughout this review, ECS has experienced a rapid increase in enrollment over the last five years. ECS has not, thus far, chosen to cap enrollment; other charter schools do limit student enrollment to a certain number each year. While this student enrollment growth has increased school monetary resources, it also calls for increases in staffing, budget, technology, assessment, and facility outlays.

Interviews showed that there were concerns over this rapid growth and its impact on the school. Interviewees suggested that an evaluation of the school’s current and future situation was necessary. With this evaluation process, the school could create a long-term strategic plan to guide the administration and governing board with future organizational decisions.

² <http://balancedscorecard.org/Resources/Strategic-Planning-Basics>

RECOMMENDATION:**Develop a strategic planning process that leads to a long-range strategic/growth plan.**

There are a number of strategic planning models available online and in published literature. The planning process that is adopted should include stakeholder input and be reviewed regularly. This process should be conducted periodically based on an adopted timeline. This will ensure that data are reviewed and updates are made to the strategic plan. The governing board and administration could facilitate the planning process or contract with an outside facilitator.

To be effective the strategic plan must lay out key milestones to measure progress, establish a priority ordering of the items to be accomplished, provide a timeline for which item is to be accomplished, and assign accountability for each item to a specified position in the school's organization. Strategic planning allows an organization to have a clear focus on what it is doing and what it intends to do based upon monitored goals. Goals in strategic plans are usually long-term, which can be achieved in a five to ten-year time frame, and short-term, which can be achieved within one to two years.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

C PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT***Personnel Management***

Personnel costs typically represent the largest expense in school districts. As a result, efficient and effective management of human resource functions is critical to the overall effectiveness of a district. Typical tasks of a school district's human resources department include the following:

- recruiting employees;
- overseeing the interviewing, selection, and processing of new employees;
- retaining employees;
- processing promotions, transfers, and resignations;
- determining and maintaining compensation schedules;
- managing insurance programs;
- managing employee benefits programs;
- planning and forecasting personnel needs;
- maintaining complete employee records, including records on training and certification;
- developing and maintaining job descriptions, which includes establishing required job credentials;



- managing the employee evaluation process;
- handling employee complaints and grievances, including grievance procedures;
- developing personnel policies; and
- ensuring that the employer follows all laws and regulations.

In order to support the mission of a school district, it is important that these human resources functions be efficient, effective, and aligned to federal and state law. Like most employers, public school districts must comply with federal laws governing human resources management. These laws include:

- *Fair Labor Standards Act*, which governs wages and hourly payments;
- *Americans with Disabilities Act*, which requires employers to provide reasonable accommodation to any employee or job applicant who has a disability; and
- *Equal Employment Opportunity Act*, which prevents employers from making hiring and firing decisions based upon age, race, religion, gender, or other factors not related to performance.

Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 states, “Except as provided for in the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act and its charter, a charter school shall be exempt from all statutes and rules relating to schools, boards of education, and school districts.” This statute has been interpreted to mean that charter school teachers are not entitled to the same due process as other public school teachers. Charter school teachers are basically “at-will” employees and work at the discretion of the governing board of the school.

However, charter schools are required to maintain certain employee documentation in regard to employee contracts. Title 70 O.S. § 3-135 states regarding employee contracts:

A charter school shall not enter into an employment contract with any teacher or other personnel until the charter school has a contract with a sponsoring school district. The employment contract shall set forth the personnel policies of the charter school...The contract shall also specifically set forth the salary, hours, fringe benefits, and work conditions....Upon contracting with any teacher or other personnel, the governing body of the charter school shall, in writing, disclose employment rights of the employees in the event the charter school closes or the charter is not renewed.

Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 further states, “Employees of a charter school may participate as members of the Teachers' Retirement System of Oklahoma in accordance with applicable statutes and rules if otherwise allowed pursuant to law...A charter school may participate in all health and related insurance programs available to the employees of the sponsor of the charter school.” ECS provides its employees with health insurance, and its staff members are included in the Oklahoma Teachers Retirement System.

The ECS governing board contracts with EYS to provide personnel services. The most recent contract states, “EYS shall select and hire a qualified principal or school leader and other personnel to perform services at the Charter School.” In regard to employment, evaluation, and termination, the contract states, “EYS shall have the responsibility and authority to determine staffing levels, and to select, evaluate, assign, discipline, transfer and terminate personnel...”

Exhibit 1-9 below shows the responses from 128 ECS staff regarding the school’s evaluation process. A majority of the respondents agreed with the statements, “I received adequate training on the teacher/leader evaluation instrument our district has adopted” and “Our district principals regularly evaluate staff members on the adopted evaluation criteria designed to improve teaching and learning.”

Exhibit 1-9
ECS Staff Survey Results Regarding
the School’s Evaluation Instrument

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I received adequate training on the teacher/leader evaluation instrument our district has adopted.	37%	40%	16%	6%	1%
Our district principals regularly evaluate staff members on the adopted evaluation criteria designed to improve teaching and learning.	55%	30%	12%	3%	0%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

ECS provides an employee handbook to its staff. The most recent version, dated November 2015, includes the following sections:

- Diversity
- Employment
- Workplace Safety
- Workplace Expectations
- Compensation
- Time off/Leaves of absence
- Benefits

Each of these sections contains subsections that provide greater detail and explanations. Each employee must acknowledge that they received a copy of the *Employee Handbook*.



Professional Development

Professional development is vitally important to school districts. In a virtual school environment it may be more so. Because virtual schools are relatively new to the education landscape, most teachers only have experience in a “brick and mortar” setting. As these experienced staff are hired by virtual charter schools, training on the operations and expectations of the virtual environment become the backbone of instructional delivery.

ECS staff is trained by EYS per the management contract. The contract states, “EYS shall provide education in its methods, curriculum, program, and technology to all teaching and administrative personnel.” **Exhibit 1-10** below shows the responses from 128 ECS staff regarding the school’s job training. The majority of the respondents indicated that they received adequate training to perform their jobs.

Exhibit 1-10 **ECS Staff Survey Results Regarding** **Job Training**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I receive adequate training overall to perform my job functions.	38%	41%	13%	6%	2%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

FINDING 1-4

The professional development for the ECS teaching staff is effective and efficient. The mission of professional development at ECS is to customize the professional development rather than simplify it. This process allows for a more individualized approach and greater consistency in participation.

Interviews showed that teachers attend training quarterly and have available on-line and on-demand training that is referred to as “Epic University.” Furthermore, the summer training at Francis Tuttle Career and Technology Center places an emphasis on Professional Learning Community (PLC) involvement while the motivational professional development over the winter break serves to reinvigorate staff for the spring semester.

COMMENDATION

ECS professional development is effective and efficient with numerous options and high staff participation.

D. COMMUNICATION AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Communication with stakeholders should be a priority for school districts. In a virtual school environment, it is equally important. Because so little communication in a virtual setting occurs face-to-face, communication via multiple platforms is necessary. Telephone calls, email, Instant Messenger, and social media are all options for virtual school communication.

Research shows that parental involvement impacts district and student performance. In a “brick and mortar” setting, parents can visit a school site, attend functions, and visit with a teacher or administrator face-to-face. In the virtual school environment, these are not always options for parental involvement. Virtual schools around the nation continue to work on creative methods to involve parents in the educational process of their students.

FINDING 1-5

ECS effectively communicates with its staff. Interviews and survey results indicated that the school’s administration is accessible to and communicates regularly with the teaching and support staff. Communication takes place via phone, internet, and face-to-face professional development and staff meetings. Communication, or the lack thereof, is often cited in Oklahoma School Performance Reviews, and ECS’s efforts in communication are commendable.

Exhibit 1-11 below shows the responses from 128 ECS staff regarding the school’s communication with staff. A majority of the respondents agreed with the statements, “The central office is accessible and effectively communicates and with district staff” and “My Principal is accessible and effectively communicates with staff.”

Exhibit 1-11 **ECS Staff Survey Results Regarding** **Communication with Staff**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The central office is accessible and effectively communicates and with district staff.	34%	44%	16%	6%	1%
My Principal is accessible and effectively communicates with staff.	67%	20%	10%	4%	0%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

COMMENDATION

ECS administration’s communication with staff is effective and shows the importance placed on this effort by the school.



FINDING 1-6

Though ECS strives to provide student activities, many parents and students desire more activities designed to bring students together. Interviews and survey results indicated that parents and students want more activities in which students work together on events, projects, and lessons. ECS makes an effort in this regard with field trips and well-attended graduation ceremonies. The school also provides money to parents through a learning fund, and this money can be used by parents and students to participate in a number of extracurricular activities.

Current Oklahoma statute and administrative code limits the activities in which virtual charter school students can participate. Title 70 O.S. § 3-145.3 states, “Students enrolled full-time in a statewide virtual charter school sponsored by the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board shall not be authorized to participate in any activities administered by the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association. However, the students may participate in intramural activities sponsored by a statewide virtual charter school, an online provider for the charter school or any other outside organization.” Furthermore, Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC) 777:10-5-3 states, “No statewide virtual charter school or employee of the statewide virtual charter school shall provide face-to-face instruction to any charter school student unless...The instruction is limited to no more than nine (9) hours per week of instruction per student.”

RECOMMENDATION:

Using stakeholder input, create more opportunities for students to work together on activities, projects, events, and lessons.

ECS should work with parents, students, and staff to design opportunities that engage students in group activities. These activities could include extracurricular events, community-based volunteer projects, and lesson plans that incorporate team building and group input. Students and parents could also be allowed to help plan and organize the award and graduation ceremonies. The school could use money from the learning fund to help pay for these activities and encourage participation via its multiple communication platforms.

Due to the limitations imposed by current Oklahoma statute and code, ECS developed the *EPIC Meet Up System*. This system was designed to create and facilitate group activities between students and staff. This system could be expanded to further engage students and staff in group activities. The use of this system should be included in discussions regarding future collaborative lessons and activities.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2:
Instructional Delivery

Chapter 2

Instructional Delivery System

This chapter addresses the instructional delivery system of Epic Charter Schools (ECS) in the following sections:

- A. Professional Learning Community
- B. Curriculum
- C. Instructional Delivery
- D. Student Performance & Data Analysis
- E. Special Programs
- F. Student Services

The primary purpose of school districts is to educate all students ensuring each learner has an equal opportunity to successfully enter college/training or a career. Many studies have documented the characteristics of effective schools. School Improvement research has been conducted largely within the past 20-25 years and is primarily descriptive based on case studies. These studies indicate that effective schools deliver quality instruction based upon a district's capacity to manage and implement challenging and relevant curriculum.¹

The Office of Educational Quality & Accountability (OEQA) believes the education process requires strongly formed policies and procedures that direct the instructional process, provides well-designed programs to meet the needs of all students, and delivers resources to support program implementation. Also, essential to the education process is the monitoring and evaluation of program effectiveness based upon the PK-12 journey outcomes and student performance data.

A. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Through ample educational research over the years, it has been confirmed that when schools and districts effectively implement professional learning communities (PLC) there is considerable improvement in student learning as well as adult learning (Annenberg, 2014²; Leana, 2011³). Although the PLC concept has been misinterpreted and defined differently in multiple contexts, OEQQA has adopted the definition provided by DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many (2008)⁴:

PLCs are defined as educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators. (p. 14)

¹ <http://www.k12.wa.us/research/pubdocs/DistrictImprovementReport.pdf>

² <http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/product/270/files/ProfLearning.pdf>

³ Leana, C. (2011). The Missing Link in School Reform.

http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the_missing_link_in_school_reform/

⁴ Dufour, DuFour, and Eaker. Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work: New Insights for Improving Schools, Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2008



Within the context of this definition, virtual charter schools should create the structures for the successful implementation of PLCs by providing the time, space, expectations, accountability, and leadership needed for overall school improvement. Research has shown that when the relationships among teachers in a school are characterized by high trust and frequent interaction—that is, when social capital is strong—student achievement scores improve (Leana). DuFour, et al. (2008) suggested six characteristics that contribute to successful PLCs.

- Shared vision, mission, values, and goals focused on student learning
- A collaborative culture with a focus on learning
- Collective inquiry into best practice and current reality
- Action orientation – learning by doing
- A commitment to continuous improvement
- Results orientation – based on results rather than intention or assumptions

Creating strong professional learning communities holds several potential advantages for schools and districts, but also for virtual charter school districts. Among the positive outcomes reported in the research are: increased efficacy, both collectively and individually; collective responsibility for student learning; reduction in teacher isolation; substantial learning about good teaching and increased content knowledge; higher morale, greater job satisfaction, greater teacher retention rates, and enthusiasm (Annenberg, 2004). Based on these findings and the benefits of PLCs, it is important to commend districts who actively promote these communities in their schools and to support districts that are involved in the earlier stages of PLC development.

FINDING 2-1

ECS administration and staff have strong beliefs in the importance of a virtual school having a collaborative culture. During interviews and focus group discussions, the teachers described their own culture as one that encourages teachers to work together to address common issues such as student learning, teaching strategies and curriculum resources. This belief and action was especially expressed by those faculty members who specifically serve the special education students.

Exhibit 2-1 presents the ECS staff survey results. The survey indicated that 94 percent of survey participants *agree* or *strongly agree* that teachers participate in professional learning communities (PLC) that meet online or in person. Only six percent had no opinion. Of the 128 participants taking the survey 53% percent were certified staff. This data conveys that most or all of the certified staff are involved in collaborative efforts within the ECS professional learning community. Additionally, it is noted that 88 percent of survey participants *agree* or *strongly agree* that Epic teachers have been trained in the professional learning communities (PLC) process that promotes discussion about student learning.

Exhibit 2-1
ECS Staff Survey Results Related to PLC Participation and Training

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers Participate in professional learning communities (PLC) that meet online or in person.	60%	34%	6%	0%	0%
Teachers in our district have been trained in the professional learning communities (PLC) process that promotes discussion about student learning.	63%	25%	8%	4%	0%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2015)

COMMENDATION

The ECS staff understands the value of a professional learning community for continuous school improvement.

FINDING 2-2

The ECS central administration successfully demonstrates professional learning communities at the top tier level including the mid-management level (principals). The regional principals meet with the Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction every Thursday in the Red/Yellow/Green (RYG) meetings. The main focus of these weekly meetings is to examine student data and make decisions based on that data. The RYG represents certain data sets; Students that are on pace to complete and maintaining good grades are coded G- green; Students making good grades but not pacing are coded Y- yellow; and students who are failing at both are coded R-red. Data concerning truancy is also reviewed. The current truancy policy states that students who do not get a certain amount of work accomplished within 10 days are then considered truant. These data meetings propel a “constant conversation” among central office, principals, staff and parents.

COMMENDATION

ECS central administration is commended for conducting consistent collaborative meetings focused on data that propels constant conversation among all stakeholders.

FINDING 2-3

ECS administration conducts PLC meetings for teachers once per quarter at the Epic district headquarters. This model is more of a professional development event as opposed to a collaborative environment for teachers to increase their efficacy through a collective approach. These quarterly PLCs provide professional development opportunities that are focused on learning needs of students and staff.

Exhibit 2-2 points out that 91 percent of survey participants *agree* or *strongly agree* that ECS promotes continuous learning based on the identified needs of the district and same number believe the training events are intended to build capacity for all professional ECS staff members.

Exhibit 2-2
ECS Staff Survey Results Related to Professional Development

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In our district, all staff members participate in continuous professional learning based on identified needs of the district.	47%	44%	9%	0%	0%
In our district, a professional development program is designed to build capacity among all professional staff members.	47%	44%	8%	1%	1%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

COMMENDATION

ECS administration is commended for implementing professional development opportunities that will build teacher capacity for implementing effective instructional strategies in a blended environment.

FINDING 2-4

Although there is evidence of an expectation for all professional staff to work in professional learning communities (PLC), survey results and interview comments by survey participants expressed that the current approach for collaboration needs a richer approach. One of the most important components of a PLC is the collaborative inquiry time where teachers meet to discuss not just data, but to have discourse on topics such as teaching strategies and curriculum matters. This collaborative time is even more important for virtual teachers who teach from an isolated environment.

In review of the staff survey, OEQA consultants noted many comments echoing the theme that current structures of the PLC collaborative meetings were not sufficient in supporting all teachers. **Exhibit 2-3** provides a sampling of teacher/staff comments related to either the current design of the ECS PLC collaborative efforts or insufficient number of encounters.

Exhibit 2-3
Teacher/Staff Comments Related to ECS PLC Design

Sampling of Teacher/Staff Comments
We do not get to collaborate with other teachers as much as in a traditional school.
Collaboration between teachers is what I would like offered to improve our virtual charter school. Just some time to talk about how we work with our students or just to discuss highlights and to share ideas.
More teacher get-togethers to get to know them.
I miss the conversations in the hallway or lunchroom of impromptu brainstorming.
The nature of virtual school can be isolating for students and teachers.
Professional Development is called "PLCs" but are not true PLCs;
Not enough interaction with other members
The most challenging aspect of working at Epic is that you are typically working in isolation. As an educator in a virtual environment one must take extra steps to create a collaborative learning environment in which to support your fellow peers and bounce ideas for student learning around.

Source: OEQA - Epic Staff Survey Results (2016)
Comments are not edited for spelling and/or mechanics



The collaborative schedules at Epic vary from one regional cohort of teachers to other regional cohorts. OEQA consultants noted from focus group discussions, the various scenarios of when and how principals meet with their teachers for collaborative PLC time. Some principals meet face-to-face in monthly meetings with their teachers while others may not meet as frequently or may only meet online. However, without formalizing the collaborative process by including the essential structures and tools then the current informal efforts will not produce the critical growth needed in student achievement and teacher development.

One of the important aspects any virtual charter should consider in ensuring a productive PLC is to create effective structures for the initiative. To accomplish this mission, the school leaders – both formal and informal – must take the lead on examining what structures are currently in place and/or not in place to support frequent formalized collaboration opportunities among staff. Structural elements that should be considered to ensure successful implementation may include:

- **Values** – what we believe and aspire to make happen
- **Procedures** – expectations, norms, agendas, accountabilities
- **Time** – specific time delegated weekly for collaborative teams
- **Space** – designated data rooms, meeting rooms
- **Materials** – formative assessments, multiple sets of data;
- **Technologies** – software/programs to support PLC actions
- **Professional Resources** – professional development of teachers and leaders

RECOMMENDATION

ECS leaders should formalize the PLC collaboration process by incorporating supportive structures and tools to drive improvement of student achievement and contribute to the professional growth of teachers.

ECS leaders must take the lead on examining what structures are in place or not in place to support the PLC Initiative. Suggestions on how to implement the structures of *PLC values, procedures, time, and space* are discussed in this section. Structural supports of *materials* and *technologies* will be included in later sections of this chapter while the structure of *human resources* will be highlighted in chapter one of this performance review.

The consulting team noted some common values shared by the ECS staff such as all students deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and should be taught by a teacher that cares about their achievement. Further, this staff values the importance of working together as a team and are committed to continuous improvement. Building on this foundation, ECS leaders should then plan the procedures that will transfer such values into actions.

In the past decade there has occurred a deeper understanding of what steps and procedures should be in place in moving teachers from isolation or even from a collaborative “hit and miss” approach to a more structured result-oriented event.⁵ Providing only the element of time for teachers to meet is not sufficient and will not affect school improvement if the focus is on issues

⁵ DuFour, et. al., (2008). Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work.

that do not directly impact student learning. When school leaders consider a procedural approach that is focused on student learning and purposeful strategies then educators will engage in collaboration that impacts both students and adult learning.⁶

ECS staff should consider developing agreed upon norms that are drafted by the group to follow each meeting. Norms make collaboration and group meetings more effective by guiding team behavior. Adopting norms enable team members to hold each other accountable for any behavior that is negatively impacting the success of the team. Clearly assigned roles and responsibilities help the team build internal capacity for planning and holding effective and focused meetings.⁷

Next, there should be an emphasis to facilitate team meetings that are conducted based on best practices that produce optimal gains for both teachers and students. ECS should craft procedures for successful facilitation during the regional team meetings where the principal is meeting with his/her staff. This can be accomplished with implementing expectations and attainable outcomes for each collaborative team meeting that is guided with a structured agenda. Although it should be consistent and structured, the agenda should be non-restrictive to the degree that it will allow for engagement of all participants. **Exhibit 2-4** provides a sample of a five phase PLC Agenda that can be used throughout a month if meetings are held virtually or f2f. For a full view of the document see **Appendix D – Resources**. The sample agenda could be adapted to fit into the virtual school model.

Exhibit 2-4 **Sample PLC Agenda for Team Meetings**

PLC Phases	Description of Phases
PHASE I: Creating or revising Pacing Calendars that reflect the state standards for core subjects	<p>This should occur quarterly and should be revised based on quarterly assessment results (benchmarks of standards taught/and/or summative data).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Phases II – V are listed on the PLC Meeting Agenda Worksheet)</p>
PHASE II: Select & Study the standards and objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the pacing calendar. What objectives have been assigned for the upcoming week/month? 2. Read the item specifications of the objectives you are going to teach next week. 3. What depth of knowledge (DoK) will be used when teaching/assessing each objective? 4. What vocabulary will need to be addressed? 5. Using the Blue Prints, how many questions will be on the test that corresponds to each objective?
PHASE III: prepare to teach the standard/objective(s)	<p>Prompts for team discussions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How to establish and relate the objective to the learners? What background knowledge will be needed? 2. In order to involve all learners, what methods will I use to explain/model the content and at what level (Depth of Knowledge -Webb) (Blooms – remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating) will I present the content? What questioning techniques will I incorporate into the presentation? 3. What modeling actions should be considered when delivering the directions during the lesson sequence? How will I activate student's prior background knowledge throughout the lesson? 4. During guided practice and independent practice I will incorporate literacy by using the following domains: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking.

(Exhibit 2-4 continues onto the next page)

⁶ Ibid

⁷ <http://www.schoolimprovementcoach.org/manual/7%20Norms%20and%20Roles.pdf>

PLC Phases	Description of Phases
	<p>5. While monitoring students during the learning process, I will adjust the instructional environment by using the following differentiated approaches: independent study, small group, peer tutoring, other?</p> <p>6. Evaluate the learning: What assessment(s) will be used? Review the released test items.</p>
PHASE IV: data analysis of formative assessment results	<p>1. Prior to the team PLC Curriculum Meeting complete this section:</p> <p>2. Using the Monitoring Student Learning Graph review the objectives that were taught the previous week. On the table below record the following: What objectives did you teach? How many scored Proficient? Advanced?</p> <p>3. List the students that scored in each category (Limited Knowledge/ Unsatisfactory) and select type of focus group – if applicable (SPED/ELL). Also record attendance data (ADA) for the previous week/month.</p>
PHASE V: Response to Intervention (RtI)	<p>Processes for Interventions: This phase requires the specialist (Special Education teacher/ Reading Specialist/ or assigned tutor to be part of the discourse.</p> <p>1. Review the list of students scoring Limited Knowledge and Unsatisfactory on the above chart and determine if they can be moved forward using strategies within the classroom (Tier One). Those students needing more intervention should move into a Tier Two approach (Use Small Group Worksheet). Students who still struggle with the objectives after Tier Two approach then move forward to Tier Three (Use Individual Worksheet). Flex grouping should be at the center of the Tier two interventions.</p> <p>2. Review the number of students remediated last 2 weeks and the grade they received after receiving remediation (both Tiers Worksheets). Review strategies to be used or have been used in remediation (see Worksheets). Are specific strategies working better than others? What may not be working as well?</p> <p>3. Compare the students not mastering to their scores from last years' OCCT or previous district Benchmarks. What is their percentage of growth?</p>

Source: OEQA- Toolkit (2015)

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 2-5

Interview dialogue from teacher focus group and survey results revealed the need for a richer process for mentoring or coaching new teachers. It must be noted however, there was a *strong agreement* or *agreement* by survey participants (81 percent) that teachers receive mentoring/ coaching opportunities for acclimating to the online environment. Conversely, comments in the survey's written responses section mostly indicated the critical need to increase mentoring opportunities for new teachers in all areas of onboarding in a virtual teaching environment (**Exhibit 2-5**).

Exhibit 2-5
Staff Survey Comments Related to Mentoring

Sampling of Teacher/Staff Comments
Responses to “What is one suggestion you would make to improve your Virtual Charter District?”
Need more "hands on" training for new teachers to learn how to get going.
To let all the staff know when a new teacher is employed
Having support staff to the GSM's that are direct teacher mentors for new staff that spends scheduled one on one time with the new staff to better equip them in their first year of teaching.
I think mentors to new teachers would help those teachers.
More "hands on" training for new teachers to learn how to get going.
More one on one training (in person) or job shadowing for new teachers.
Responses to “What do you like least about your Virtual Charter District?”
I feel that there is not enough teacher/mentor relationships in the field.
New teachers need another teacher to mentor them through the process not an admin leader
Responses to “What do you like best about your Virtual Charter District?”
I appreciate the support that I get from my principal and mentor teachers.

Source: OEQA - ECS Staff Survey Results (2015)

As required by HB 2885 (2014) all new teachers (defined as one in an instructional capacity, counselor, librarian or nurse §70-6-101.3.) must participate in a residency program starting in school year 2015-2016. However, this does not apply to charter schools. As best practice in a virtual charter school environment this should also include *any* teacher *new* to the virtual platform. The consulting team acknowledges that ECS has an onboarding plan for all new teachers to its system, but the sustainable actions for mentoring throughout the first year seem to be limited as indicated in the above exhibit.

In light of the state's teacher shortage, mentoring/coaching should be considered as a high priority. A trend recently discovered in studies conducted in the past few years, reveals teacher attrition – teachers leaving teaching, which is especially high in the first years on the job. Several studies have estimated that between 40% and 50% of new teachers leave within the first five years of entry into teaching. Moreover, the attrition rates of first-year teachers have increased by about one-third in the past two decades. So, not only are there far more beginners in the teaching force, but these beginners are less likely to stay in teaching. In short, both the number and instability of beginning teachers have been increasing in recent years.⁸

RECOMMENDATION

Enrich the current mentoring/coaching program ensuring *all* staff (mentor/ mentees) is aware of its existence and that it is consistently implemented throughout the initial year or as needed in the second year of employment.

Although ECS recently implemented the onboarding program of a full-time mentor for new teachers, there are gaps in the dissemination of that knowledge among some staff. ECS should review how to communicate their current onboarding plan for mentoring all new teachers and seek ways to continue it for those in their second year of service. **Exhibit 2-6** presents the four stages of onboarding and a description for each stage. The table has been adapted to reflect the dynamics for onboarding in a virtual environment.

⁸ http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/05/16/kappan_ingersoll.h31.html?print=1

Exhibit 2-6
Three Stages for Successful Onboarding of New Teachers

Stage	Description of Actions	Reflection – How does our organization measure up at each stage?
Cultivation <i>Before school begins</i>	<p>Purpose?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Cultivation helps ensure that candidates begin teaching despite competition from other school districts or challenges ➢ Allows new teachers to start the year feeling informed and supported ➢ Encourages new and current staff members to return informed and prepared for the first few weeks of school <p>Who Do You Target?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ New hires to your school ➢ Transfer teachers new to your school ➢ Returning staff members <p>When?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Begins when you recruit a teacher ➢ Ends when teacher starts at your school <p>Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It allows you to predict and plan for any potential vacancies and last minute withdrawals. ➢ It is often the highest quality candidates (those who have other offers) who need this type of encouragement to remain in the process. Most high-need subject area candidates will continue to receive competing offers. 	Was the information provided relevant to all new teachers at this time? Were the staff members chosen to help with this process appropriate and effective?
Orientation <i>During the first days of school</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ During the orientation phase we want to capitalize on teachers' anticipation and prepare them for the survival period. They want to know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistics • Instructional Support • Expectations of the Principal ➢ The most frequently cited reason for new teachers' difficulties in the classroom and/or the reason they leave the classroom is unclear principal expectations and lack of or poor quality administrator support ➢ New teachers look primarily to principals for guidance and direction on Performance 	What information was relevant to new teachers at this time? Were our expectations clear and communicated effectively? What resources were provided to ensure the teachers were well-prepared for the beginning of school?
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ First Week: During the first week, new teachers need their principal to be visible and supportive – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each day contact teacher virtually or by phone to check on how things are going • Share sincere encouragement about their teaching at least twice • Identify mentors and what the support looks like 	

(Exhibit 2-6 continues onto the next page)

Stage	Description of Actions	Reflection – How does our organization measure up at each stage?
Support <i>During the first months of school</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give new teachers a welcome gift <p>➤ First Month: During the first month of school, most new teachers say that they need help with day-to-day tasks – Help teachers to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn routines and procedures related to the online teaching environment • Develop classroom management skills and deal with truancy problems • Understand how to diagnose/assess student performance • Understand how to manage the various curriculum platforms • Begin regular communication with parents and students <p>➤ Second Month: During the second month of school, most new teachers say that they need more feedback on their facilitation/ instructional practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule formal/informal observations using a virtual purview; give immediate feedback (positive and constructive) so teachers can self-correct • Set up opportunities for peer model lessons at staff/collaborative meetings • Help teachers learn to identify big and small issues and to prioritize • Encourage self-reflection; build this into staff/collaborative meetings 	<p>What information will be relevant to my new teachers at this time?</p> <p>What will my observation and feedback schedule look like?</p>
Sustainability <i>For Retention</i>	<p>➤ Possible impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of EXCELLENT teachers • Higher student achievement • Increased teacher effectiveness; stronger management of relationships (parent/student) • Higher job satisfaction; lower levels of stress 	<p>What is our teacher retention rate?</p> <p>➤ Bottom line, effective onboarding programs impact retention rates</p> <p>What does it “cost” your students, you and your school to replace a teacher once the school year has started?</p> <p>➤ It costs districts on average over \$10,000 to replace each teacher vacancy once the school year has started.</p> <p>➤ A study found that when administrators offer high-quality onboarding program combined, the retention rate of new teachers was over 93%</p> <p>Additional Losses?</p> <p>➤ Time students lose with a full-time teacher</p> <p>➤ Time to find a replacement</p> <p>➤ Drain on other faculty and staff</p>

Source: OEQA's Adaptation of HISD's Onboarding Training Manual (2012)⁹

⁹ [http://hisdeffectiveteachers.org/assets/Onboarding_HISD\(1\).pdf](http://hisdeffectiveteachers.org/assets/Onboarding_HISD(1).pdf)



ECS Charter School is committed to consistent improvement and addressing mentoring/onboarding strategies. This was evidenced in the ECS 2015-16 Annual Strategic Plan with the goal to, “Expand our Professional Department to include full time Mentor Teachers to work with new or under-performing teachers”. However, this strategy was new and had not been fully implemented at the time of OEQA consultants’ onsite visit.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

B. CURRICULUM

Oklahoma state education laws, as codified in the Oklahoma Administrative Code (210 OS § 15), manage the instructional process to ensure academic success for all students. It is the responsibility of the virtual charter district to meet the requirements of the law as they apply. A district’s instructional program, along with its allocation of resources, is the means by which a district attempts to meet the educational needs of all students. A well designed and managed process for developing curriculum and directing instruction, collecting assessment data to evaluate and monitor programs, and providing the resources needed to support educational efforts are essential if a district is to meet the needs of its students.

Curriculum development and instructional delivery are critical components of student learning. The presentation of materials, concepts, skills, and new ideas greatly affect the acquisition of knowledge. Curriculum content and instructional strategies need proper alignment and regularly scheduled evaluations. This promotes improvement of student performance and ensures curricular relevance, rigor, and equity.

Oklahoma school boards and superintendents provide principals and teachers with necessary tools to deliver the state adopted standards. The Oklahoma Academic Standards, (OAS), drive educational delivery. With the recent adoption of OAS, educators are encouraged to reshape their educational efforts by integrating rigorous instruction with the goal that such efforts will redefine what performing at a high level looks like and students are college and career ready.

OAS provides a consistent, clear articulation of learning expectations, guides teacher instruction, and assists parents in knowing what they need to do to help with the educational process. The academic state standards are intended to mirror the robust, relevant; real-world knowledge and skills students will need for successful transition into post-secondary institutions and/or careers. OAS defines the content, knowledge, and skills students should gain during their K-12 educational career. OAS prepares high school graduates for success in college courses and in workforce environments. **Exhibit 2-7** further explains what Oklahoma Academic Standards *do* and *don’t do*.

Exhibit 2-7
Newly Adopted (2016) Oklahoma Academic Standards

What Oklahoma Academic Standards Do	What Oklahoma Academic Standards Do Not Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do focus on deep thinking, conceptual understanding, and real-world problem solving skills • Do set expectations for students to be College, Career, and Citizenship ready • Do incorporate literacy in science, Social Studies, and Technical Subjects • Do emphasize the use of citations and examples from texts when creating opinions and arguments • Do increase rigor and grade-level expectations • Do determine the full range of support for English Language Learners and Students with Special needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not dictate how teachers should teach • Do not mandate a specific curriculum • Do not limit advanced work beyond the standards • Do not require the purchase or development of entirely new instructional materials • Do not prescribe all that can or should be taught • Do not limit efforts to prepare students for college, career, or citizenship readiness • Do not prescribe interventions for students below grade-level

Source: SDE, Updated May 2016

FINDING 2-6

ECS provides 15 curriculum paths with supplemental curriculum to support all students in all grade levels. This variety of curriculum allows students and their families to choose, with guidance from their assigned teacher, the best fit for their child's specific learning style(s). Parent survey responses (**Exhibit 2-8**) indicated that 88 percent of parents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that their students' needs were met with the selected curriculum with only five percent in disagreement.

Exhibit 2-8
Parent Survey Responses Related to Curriculum

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child's teachers provide a curriculum that meets his/her learning needs.	56%	32%	7%	4%	1%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

The Graduation Student Managers (GSM) is also a key in the curriculum selection especially at the secondary level. Having such a broad spectrum for curriculum selection allows for much flexibility. The curriculum is flexible for changing in case a student is slated to graduate but needs a different path to make that happen. Because the system has so much affability, students can have more choices on electives. An example might be that he/she is performing poorly in a core subject and needs remediation; at this point an elective may be changed to a remediation course to support the core course. **Exhibit 2-9** further supports parents' positive feedback regarding the flexibility of the curriculum and the multiple choices provided.

Exhibit 2-9
Positive Survey Comments Related to the Curriculum

Staff Responses to “What do you like best about your Virtual Charter District?”
the variety of curriculum
I like that students have the best opportunity to succeed at their best at their pace and their ability with choice of approved curriculum.
Parent Responses to “What do you like best about your Virtual Charter District?”
Flexibility. Speed of advancement in curriculum
There are a lot of visuals and texts that can be read to him. Since [child] is on an IEP, [child's] reading level is very low. I feel the curriculum is better suited for him. I also like that I can choose [child's] curriculum.
I like that I can choose from a variety of curriculum.
the curriculum was easy to grasp.
I like the flexibility to use a curriculum that meets my child's needs
The curriculum
Flexibility in schedule and tailoring curriculum to [child's] needs
Differentiation and the ability to choose curriculum

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

When schools, whether online or brick and mortar, offer such flexibility and support for each individual student then parents will be more likely to continue their child's education within that learning environment. Curriculum pliancy is one of the appealing components ECS offers that attracts parents to this online school.

COMMENDATION

ECS is commended for providing students with multiple curriculum paths and supports that allow flexibility for student success.

FINDING 2-7

Although ECS offers optimum curriculum choices, flexibility, and islands of excellence with teacher facilitation of the curriculum, current processes and procedures for *overall* successful facilitation and implementation may be weak – causing confusion among parents. **Exhibit 2-10** provides a sampling of comments from parent surveys as related to the curriculum. Sample comments were similar with a sense of dissatisfaction or misunderstanding of the processes or procedures.

Exhibit 2-10
Sampling of Parent Survey Comments Related to Curriculum

Parent Responses to “What is one suggestion you would make to improve your Virtual Charter District?”
get teachers who know the curriculum and curriculums that actually work properly not the programs with so many bugs to work out
Choosing an online curriculum is difficult because I cannot see any samples of the actual curriculum to decide if it will suite her interests and learning style.
a little more info on the curriculum choices. maybe a website to sample the different ones.
To better evaluate choice in curriculum so that parents could make better choices
Up to date language curriculum.
I would like for the curriculum to be more interactive and less redundant.
Curriculum that emphasizes arts, creativity, and critical thinking.
Curriculum options that are more hands on.
Parent Responses to “What do you like least about your Virtual Charter District?”
The lack of flexibility with regards to the curriculum and the lack of choices
The stress of choosing the right curriculum.
I would like for the curriculum to be more interactive and less redundant
Also, the online curriculum became very monotonous.
get teachers who know the curriculum and curriculums that actually work properly not the programs with so many bugs to work out

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

The U.S. Department of Education currently funds the Center for Online Learning and Students with Disabilities (COLSD) to research how online learning can be made more accessible. COLSD recognizes the research finding that knowledge and skills, both technological and pedagogical, necessary for success differ dramatically from those skills and knowledge required in brick-and-mortar settings. With such acknowledgement, it is critical that virtual charter districts enrich their processes and procedures in all areas specifically in implementation and teacher facilitation of all curriculums. **Exhibit 2-11** provides staff responses related to the curriculum. Some teachers may not have the critical training or may not understand the processes for facilitating curriculum choices for their students.

Exhibit 2-11
Sampling of Staff Survey Comments Related to Curriculum

Staff Responses to “What is one suggestion you would make to improve your Virtual Charter District?”
Too many curriculum choices results in teacher's not knowing what standards are being covered
What I like least about my virtual charter school is that there are many late nights getting reports in or developing curriculum for students, but I would be doing that with any school I would be working at!
Staff Responses to “What do you like least about your Virtual Charter District?”
Reduction of curriculum choices.
Reduce the amount of curriculum being offered

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)



RECOMMENDATION

Review current processes that are in place for curriculum implementation and determine what procedures need to be added that will enrich the process thus increasing parent satisfaction and teacher capacity.

ECS provides training for all teachers before school begins in the fall and then provides PLC training each quarter for all teachers and staff. In order to increase parent satisfaction ECS should ensure all teachers have the capacity for understanding and implementing all curriculums for their students. Building teacher capacity might involve a scaffolding training approach that would specifically target teachers' implementation of curriculum and increase their knowledge of the district adopted curriculums. For example, teachers would be placed into specific PLC curriculum training as it matches their capacity level, which would be determined by the results of a survey assessment. Once a teacher completes one level then she/he may be moved up to the next level. This leveled approach could also be integrated into PD offerings within the Epic University (Epic University is an innovative online PD approach created by ECS leadership).

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 2-8

ECS provides teachers with scope and sequence documents to support vertical curriculum alignment in the core areas. With the transition to OAS, the district has ensured a smoother transition by providing this essential document. **Exhibit 2-12** presents staff survey responses related to vertical alignment. Responses indicated that a high percentage of staff survey participants *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that scope and sequence documents were provided for teachers.

Exhibit 2-12
Staff Survey Responses Regarding Curriculum Documents

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers have scope and sequence documents that determine what is taught at each grade level.	44%	38%	15%	3%	0%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

Vertical alignment, organizing curriculum from one grade level or content area to the next, is often challenging. Vertical alignment allows each teacher to build upon the work of the previous teacher without duplication or inconsistency of what has been taught. Proper vertical alignment requires digging into curriculum at all levels to align and layer skills, content, and background knowledge. ECS teachers are continuously involved in such alignment since the concept of looping is a large component of the ECS one-on-one model. The results of this vertical focus appear successful based on the parent survey responses. **Exhibit 2-13** illustrates that 83 percent of parents strongly agree or agree that their child is prepared for the next grade level.



Exhibit 2-13
Parent Survey Response Related to Vertical Alignment and Student Preparation

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child is prepared for the next grade level in the next school year.	44%	39%	12%	3%	2%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

Vertical alignment articulates the logical, consistent order for teaching the standards-based content in a subject area from one grade level or course to the next. Vertical alignment is conducted as a multistep process that requires substantial time and input from district staff. In a standards-based system, vertical alignment provides a structure by which to assess achievement results. When an aligned curriculum also is aligned with performance or benchmark assessments, educators can begin to examine differences in instruction across grades and subjects within the district.¹⁰

Vertical alignment is defined as “Ensuring that curriculum objectives are specific and build one upon another, that prerequisites are mastered, gaps are eliminated, and there is an increasing sophistication and rigor in concepts, processes, and skills across the grades.”¹¹ A process for vertical alignment asks teachers to address the following issues as they pertain to reading:

- align *student expectations* across grades;
- align *assessments* across grades;
- find and fill *gaps*;
- clarify and minimize *overlaps*;
- increase *expectations* with regard to rigor and sophistication year to year;
- build upon *prerequisite skills*; and
- build *common vocabulary*.¹²

COMMENDATION

ECS is commended for providing and implementing vertical curriculum alignment documents that ensure student preparation for the next grade level.

FINDING 2-9

Although a majority of staff reported that they have access to Pacing Calendars to assist them, **Exhibit 2-14** reveals over one-fourth of the respondents (28 percent) had *no opinion* or *disagreed* that they have access to pacing calendars. At the time of the onsite visit, Pacing Calendars were not part of the data reviewed by OEQA consultants. There may have been

¹⁰ <http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/CenterIssueBriefAug09.pdf>

¹¹ Curriculum and Alignment - Arizona Department of Education <https://www.azed.gov/> p.12

¹² Curriculum and Alignment - Arizona Department of Education <https://www.azed.gov/> p.12



confusion of survey respondents in differentiating pacing calendars from scope and sequence documents.

Exhibit 2-14
Parent Survey Response Related to Access to Pacing Calendars

Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers know what is to be taught and when because they have access to a district adopted Pacing Calendar that reflects the current Oklahoma Academic Standards	42%	31%	19%	9%	0%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2016)

Pacing Calendars provide teachers with a guide on knowing *what* OAS to teach and *when* to teach those standards for each grade level in all core content areas. Sometimes it is referred to as a curriculum map, schedule, instructional calendar, or road map. It is specific to a particular content area and level (e.g., 5th grade Science) and details when particular content standards should be taught and/or assessed during the year. While still offering teachers flexibility on how to teach, its integration with common assessments is crucial to judging student progress.

As ECS transitions into the new OAS and the task of updating all documents, there should be a focused effort for ensuring all staff are clear on the use of and the differences between scope and sequence documents and pacing calendars. This may also be a time that Epic will want to employ Pacing Calendars that integrate the state's suggested blue prints and Depth of Knowledge (DoK) levels.

RECOMMENDATION

Update all grade level/content specific pacing calendars that reflect standards taught quarterly; include (DoK) levels and blue print assessment information; while ensuring all staff members are thoroughly acquainted with these documents.

There are multiple promising outcomes for updating and implementing Pacing Guides/Calendars that integrate the DoK and blue print assessment information. Below are just a few that ECS should consider:

- Improve student performance and reduce gaps in student achievement.
- Avoid gaps in learning when students transfer from school to school or move from grade/level to grade/level.
- Avoid unintended repetition in learning when students transfer from school to school or move from grade/level to grade/level.
- Render results that inform decisions made concerning instructional strategies, programs, curriculum, etc.



- Inform collaboration between educators.
- Facilitate alignment of the upcoming Oklahoma Academic Standards
- Highlight cross-curricular opportunities.
- Help teachers be more effective while making lesson planning easier and saving them time.
- Help teachers and students make the most of their time.

OEQA has developed sample pacing calendar templates that might even serve as lesson plan templates to provide support for OSPR districts. **Exhibit 2-15** presents a section from the fifth grade English/Language Arts (ELA) pacing calendar/lesson plan template. Not shown in the exhibit is the key that details the levels of DoK, OAS strands for ELA, and Quarter Marks. The key and full page exhibits can also be found in **Appendix D - Resources**.

Exhibit 2-15
Excerpt from Fifth Grade ELA Pacing Calendar/Lesson Plan Template

PASS #	DESCRIPTION OF PASS	QUARTER 1, 2, 3, 4 (circle one)	BLUEPRINT		DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE		
Standard & Objectives * <i>Italics = not assessed on OCCT</i>		Period: Weeks 1-2; 3-4; 5-6 Resources: (text, p#, web-support) Action: I/ T2M/ A	# of items	% of test	# of L1	# of L2	# of L3
1.0	Vocabulary - The student will develop and expand knowledge of words and word meanings to		12	24%	20-25%	65-70%	5-15%
1.1.a	Words in Context: Use knowledge of word parts and word relationships, as well as context clues (the meaning of the text around a word), to determine the meaning of specialized vocabulary and to understand the precise meaning of grade-level-appropriate words.	Week: Resources: Action: Assessment:			3		1

Source: OEQAs Toolkit (2015)

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources. OEQAs can provide technical assistance with the adoption and implementation of pacing calendars at no cost to the district.

C. INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

The educational challenges facing schools today are multifaceted and even more so in virtual school environments. Determining the most effective ways to address all the issues that impact student achievement is complex. Education research is replete in focusing on one element – instruction. However, that body of research does not always extend to the online environment.

Virtual schools are rising in popularity and presence. Unfortunately, there is a relative dearth of research related to teaching and learning in virtual schools. Although there are numerous handbooks addressing teaching online, there is little research on successful online teaching in the K-12 arena. Much of the existing research focused on teaching online is rooted in face-to-face content, not focused on content areas, built upon a post-secondary audience, or fails to use data from the teachers themselves to triangulate findings.¹³

Notwithstanding, research indicates that instructional delivery matters significantly. The literature clearly outlines common principles and foundational teaching practices that are necessary to improve student performance. These practices cut across all content areas and grade levels. This section will focus on *instructional leadership, instructional delivery in a blended environment, evaluation of instructional delivery program, instructional technology and instruction through adopted assessments.*

Instructional Leadership

School administrators must have pragmatic knowledge, skills, strategies, and tools to positively affect student achievement. They must move their instructional leadership skill set past abstract and theoretical thinking to concrete, day-to-day practices to be effective leaders. Instructional leaders understand the need for multi-faceted strategies that enable them to know when, how, and why leadership action must be taken.

Superintendents and principals form the core of educational leadership in school districts whether those schools are of brick and mortar or within a virtual environment. Over the past two decades, the role of the school leader has changed and so the expectations and training of new administrators. Today, the educational leader is responsible for consistency of implementation of an aligned curriculum, the quality of instruction, and student performance. Recent research contends that school leaders influence classroom teaching, and consequently student learning, by staffing schools with highly effective teachers and supporting those teachers with effective teaching and learning environments.¹⁴

The College of Education at Washington University, Center for Educational Leadership (CEL), has developed a framework for instructional leadership. According to their website, the framework is not the sum total of the work of instructional leaders. It is a description of the most important aspects of instructional leadership. **Exhibit 2-16a** describes the five core beliefs that drive the work in school leadership at the Center for Educational Leadership, and **Exhibit 2-16b** describes the four dimensions of instructional leadership.

¹³ Best practices in teaching K-12 online: Lessons learned from Michigan Virtual School teachers
<http://www.ncolr.org/jiol/issues/pdf/7.1.2.pdf>

¹⁴ http://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Kappan_leadership.pdf.

Exhibit 2-16a
Core Beliefs – Center for Educational Leadership

Beliefs
Instructional leadership is learning-focused, learning for both students and adults, and learning which is measured by improvement in instruction and in the quality of student learning.
Instructional leadership must reside with a team of leaders of which the principal serves as the “leader of leaders.”
A culture of public practice and reflective practice is essential for effective instructional leadership and the improvement of instructional practice.
Instructional leadership addresses the cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning diversity in the school community.
Instructional leadership focuses upon the effective management of resources and of people – recruiting, hiring, developing, evaluating – particularly in changing environments.

Source: 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership¹⁵

Exhibit 2-16b
Dimensions of Instructional Leadership

Dimensions
Vision, Mission, and Culture Building
School leaders, committed to collective leadership, create a reflective, equity-driven, achievement-based culture of learning focused upon academic success for every student.
Improvement of Instructional Practice
Based upon a shared vision of effective teaching and learning, school leaders establish a focus on learning; nurture a culture of continuous improvement, innovation, and public practice; and monitor, evaluate and develop teacher performance to improve instruction.
Allocation of Resources
School leaders allocate resources strategically so that instructional practice and student learning continue to improve.
Management of People and Processes
School leaders engage in strategic personnel management and develop working environments in which teachers have full access to supports that help improve instruction.

Source: 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership¹⁶

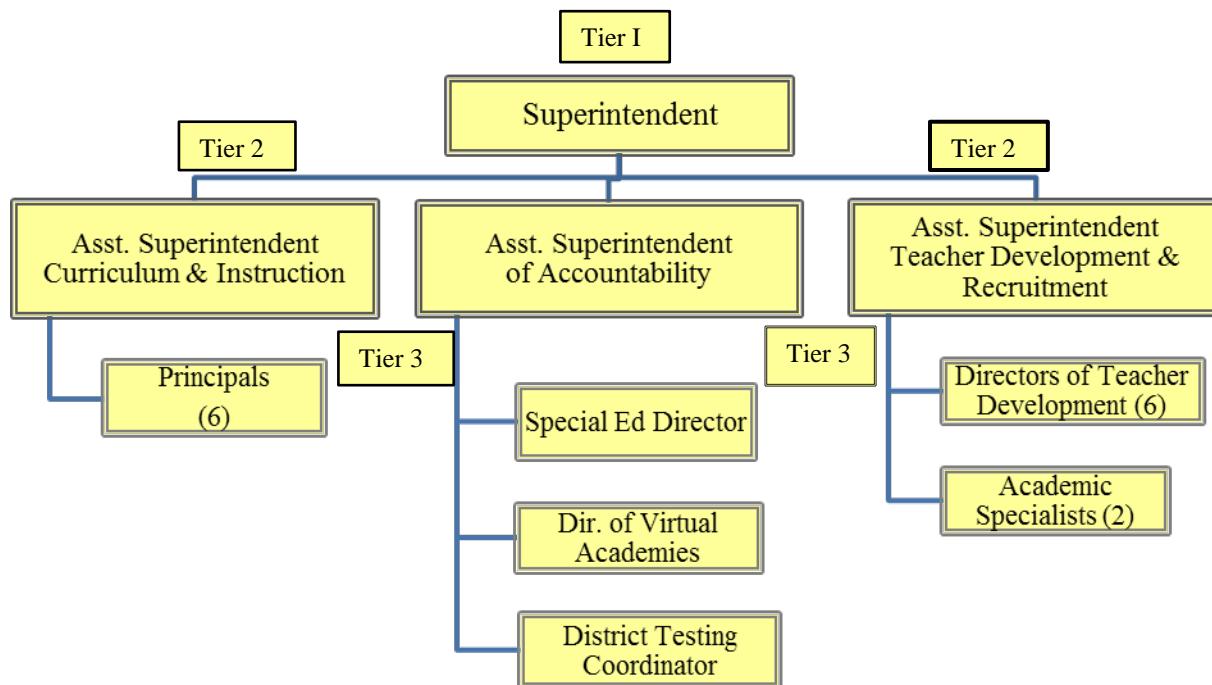
Exhibit 2-17 provides the onsite visit snapshot of ECS’s organizational chart as it relates to the leadership for instructional delivery. First tier includes the Superintendent only. Second tier comprises of the assistant superintendents, while the third tier consists of principals and directors.

¹⁵ <http://info.k-12leadership.org/4-dimensions-of-instructional-leadership>

¹⁶ <http://info.k-12leadership.org/4-dimensions-of-instructional-leadership>



Exhibit 2-17
ECS Instructional Leadership Organizational Chart



Created by OEQA 2016

FINDING 2-10

ECS's instructional delivery system is supported by three levels of leadership that is directly responsible for student outcomes. Survey results as well as interviews and focus group comments indicate a high satisfaction with the instructional leadership at ECS.

Exhibit 2-18 provides staff survey results related to the perception of the district administration and principals as instructional leaders. Ninety-eight percent of survey respondents *strongly agree* or *agree* that district administration provides a continuous instructional improvement process. Also, 85 percent of survey participants *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that their principal(s) were effective instructional leaders with 12 percent having *no opinion* and 4 percent who *disagree*.

Exhibit 2-18
Staff Survey Results Related to the Instructional Leadership

Staff Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our district has a continuous improvement process based on data, goals, actions, and measures for growth.	74%	24%	3%	0%	0%
My Principal is an effective instructional leader	63%	22%	12%	4%	0%

Source: OEQA- ECS Survey Results (2016)

COMMENDATION

ECS is commended for providing excellent instructional leaders to guide the district's ongoing commitment toward student success and school improvement.

FINDING 2-11

ECS principals are assigned as online instructors for one student per year in addition to their administrative duties. The policy is that all new principals that are new to Epic serve as a teacher for one student their 1st year of principalship. Epic central office leaders feel that if principals experience firsthand what it is to be a teacher in ECS's school model it will provide them an internal perspective. This perspective coupled with experience in the model improves their ability to effectively support the teachers that report to them.

In email correspondence the superintendent added that, "this policy also lets the teachers know that the principal has walked in their shoes and understands their duties and responsibilities". In addition, OEQA consultants observed that this policy ensures that principals have a comprehensive view and day-to-day experiences dealing with student motivation, parental involvement, curriculum, and instructional strategies. This type of policy strengthens the power of administrators as instructional leaders within the virtual environment. Since the research literature for online personnel points to the fact that administrator education programs do not include the need to prepare administrators for virtual positions (LaFrance & Beck, 2014)¹⁷, it is paramount that virtual charter schools take on this responsibility.

COMMENDATION

ECS is commended for implementing policies that contribute to a principal's development in the area of instructional leadership.

FINDING 2-12

Due to ECS's exponential growth the district has experienced challenges in providing consistency with assigned principals to each of the six designated regions of the state. Comments from the staff surveys indicated satisfaction with the current assigned principals; however, an expressed desire to maintain consistency in principal staffing was noted. During interviews with ECS leadership it was explained to OEQA consultants that for the upcoming year additional principals would be provided to supervise regular education and special education faculty with a goal of obtaining a 30:1 ratio.

Any organization that experiences accelerated growth will no doubt have staffing consistency issues as described earlier. However, such mobility in principal leadership may negatively impact teacher morale and teacher training, which could then inadvertently lead to teacher attrition. The actions of ECS to counteract this dilemma with hiring additional leadership staff are commendable; yet at the end of the day will not sufficiently sustain for the long haul in creating leadership stability while rapid growth continues to occur.

¹⁷ Journal of Open, Flexible, and Distance Learning, 18(2)

RECOMMENDATION

The Superintendent and second tier administrative staff should draft a strategic and focused leadership staffing plan to ensure supportive structures are in place that promotes consistency and assurance during periods of exponential growth.

While onsite the consulting team witnessed strategic planning at various levels. Most impressive was the plan and its implementation of teacher recruitment. ECS should take such proactive and innovative approaches for staffing of principals. The importance of consistency in staffing of principals is reiterated in CEL's fourth dimension, which states, "School leaders engage in strategic personnel management and develop working environments in which teachers have full access to supports that help improve instruction".¹⁸ This will occur with consistent leadership which supports stability during challenging times of growth.

A successful strategy that should be considered in a plan for leadership staffing (principals) is succession planning, that is, developing leaders from within. At the time of OEQA's onsite visit succession had occurred, but not based on a formalized succession planning effort. In the business world, Cohen and Tichy (2002) found that among publicly traded companies, ones that were considered "winning companies" and sustained success were ones where leaders took responsibility for developing leaders from inside the company.¹⁹ This approach would ensure consistency and familiarity in staffing.

ECS should take strategic steps in developing a pool of candidates for consideration as potential leaders within each regional area and/or central office. Preparing a pool of prospective candidates for the principalship is to provide opportunities to take up these acting positions as growth continues. In two studies, Draper and McMichael (2002, 2003) found that some schools had initiated aspiring principal programs that promoted teacher leaders as aspiring principals. The study concluded that rather than the usual sudden appointment process to acting principalship, the districts created a pool of those interested and gave them induction and training prior to specific principalships becoming available as well as offering adequate support for them once in position.²⁰

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation may be implemented with existing resources.

Instructional Delivery in a Blended Environment

The effectiveness of instructional delivery whether it is in a face-to-face forum or in a virtual setting is considered as having the most impact on a student's success in content mastery. Tucker and Strange (2005) linked the evaluation of teacher effectiveness with student achievement. It is now known, empirically, that effective teachers have a direct influence in enhancing student learning. Years of research on teacher quality support the fact that effective teachers not only make students feel good about school and learning (regardless of setting), but also that their work

¹⁸ <http://info.k-12leadership.org/4-dimensions-of-instructional-leadership>

¹⁹ <https://www.oecd.org/edu/school/2635399.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.oecd.org/edu/school/2635399.pdf>



actually results in increased student achievement. Studies have substantiated that a whole range of personal and professional qualities are associated with higher levels of student achievement. For example, such skills are verbal ability, content knowledge; pedagogical knowledge, ability to use a range of teaching strategies skillfully, and enthusiasm for the subject characterize more successful teachers.²¹

How does this research translate to virtual instructional practices? K-12 virtual schooling is still developing as a field of research, policy, and practice. One specific area with limited research is a deep understanding of promising instructional practices used by K-12 virtual school teachers. An understanding of the instructional practices of K-12 virtual school teachers is vital to the field of online education. It is a critical need because teaching in K-12 virtual, online schools requires skills that are unique from those used in face-to-face settings. OEQA consultants reviewed the available research literature to explore some instructional practices that have shown to be promising for K-12 online instruction and/or blended instruction. **Exhibit 2-19** provides a synthesis of the research related to promising practices found to be critical for successful online learning programs.

Exhibit 2-19 **A Synthesis of Promising Instructional Practices for Online Learning**

Practice	Description of Practice	Supporting References
Connecting with Students -through effective communication	Commitment participants made to establishing relationships with students because of their perceived impact on student motivation and success.	DiPietro (2010);
Fluid practice - moving from their self-perception as a “knowledge giver” to one of a “knowledge guide”	The transition experienced by participants to facilitate the translation of their prior practices to better suit the necessities of teaching in the virtual course setting.	DiPietro;
Engaging Students with Content Getting students excited about content; Integrating technology to motivate students; Motivate students to interact with content; Motivating students through the structure of content; Using technology to facilitate learning; Using technology to illustrate content	The use of strategies to satisfy specific goals for making content accessible and integrating technology represent enactments of the belief virtual school teachers have about engaging students with the content.	DiPietro; Pazzaglia, Clements, Lavigne, Stafford, (2016)
Supporting Student Success – Meeting student needs; structuring content to scaffold learning; utilize support structures	Communicating with students to address needs; Encouraging and helping students establish a routine; Giving feedback; Helping students achieve their goals; Using directive communication; Adapting course to accommodate pacing; Creating an organized environments;	DiPietro; Hanover Research, 2009
Implementing Instruction based on Data - this instructional strategy engages teachers in regularly analyzing quantifiable data from student assessments and other metrics. Based on their analyses, teachers modify	Instruction based on data is made easier within the virtual environment due to the automated student information system that includes not only state test results but also benchmarking and formative common assessments.	Paul Bambrick-Santoyo's Driven by Data: A Practical Guide to Improve

²¹ <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/104136/chapters/The-Power-of-an-Effective-Teacher-and-Why-We-Should-Assess-It.aspx>

Practice	Description of Practice	Supporting References
instruction with the goal of improving student academic achievement.		Instruction
Use of multiple strategies for assessing student learning –	Assessment strategies should involve consideration of student learning styles; this also includes allowing students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that are personally meaningful.	DiPietro, Ferdig, Black, & Preston (2008)
Form collaborative relationship with parents of students - researchers have stressed the importance of schools creating policies that help parents to better understand and respond to student needs	“Parents and instructors are more likely to effectively and efficiently collaborate once a sense of closeness has been formed and parents and instructors have established a degree of social presence” (p. 21). As a result, online programs should use more varied and continuous strategies to ensure parental engagement.	Borup et al. (2014)

*Source: OEQAA Adaptation of
DiPietro, et al., Synthesis of Promising Instructional Practices for Online Learning (2016)²²*

FINDING 2-13

ECS staff and parent survey responses reflect satisfaction with teachers' instructional delivery competencies in a blended environment. Instructional delivery practices that were found to be promising or best practices for online learning (see Exhibit 2-19) seemed to also be commonly used by ECS staff. **Exhibit 2-20a** displays staff responses and **Exhibit 2-20b** provides parent responses related to successful instructional delivery practices that are used by ECS staff. In all three survey questions, Staff *strongly agreed* or *agreed* (with an average of 93 percent) that their instructional delivery strategies met student needs, encouraged critical thinking, and provided timely feedback. Parents likewise *strongly agreed* or *agreed* (with an average of 87 percent) that teachers employed successful instructional delivery strategies including feedback to students and parents.

Exhibit 2-20a ECS Staff Responses Related to Instructional Delivery

Staff Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers develop and implement instructional strategies and interventions to address individual learning needs of students.	62%	32%	6%	0%	0%
Teachers consistently use instructional strategies that require self-reflection and development of critical thinking skills.	43%	47%	9%	1%	0%
Teachers provide students with specific and timely feedback about their learning.	43%	53%	3%	1%	0%

Source: OEQAA- ECS Survey Results (2016)

²² Journal of Interactive Online Learning www.ncolr.org/jiol

Exhibit 2-20b
ECS Parent Responses Related to Instructional Delivery

Parent Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child's teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities.	50%	30%	14%	5%	1%
My child's teachers meet his/her learning needs by individualizing instruction.	54%	31%	9%	5%	1%
My child's teachers help me to understand my child's progress.	54%	32%	10%	4%	1%
My child's teachers keep me informed regularly of my child's academic progress.	53%	33%	7%	5%	2%
My child knows the expectations for learning in all classes.	52%	38%	8%	2%	1%
My child's teachers report on my child's progress in easy to understand language.	53%	34%	9%	3%	1%

Source: OEQA- ECS Survey Results (2016)

COMMENDATION

ECS staff is commended for employing promising instructional delivery strategies in an online learning environment.

FINDING 2-14

ECS is a unique virtual charter school in that it provides multiple instructional delivery platforms for students to be engaged learners. Students are provided both synchronous and asynchronous online formats and then offered face-to-face opportunities with their teachers. ECS's policy is that teachers are to meet up (face-to-face) with their students at least once every 21 days, but many faculty members make it a habit of meeting up much more frequently. **Exhibit 2-21** provides student survey responses regarding their experiences in instructional delivery platforms and formats. The asynchronous format is used most according to 76 percent of survey respondents with a surprising 67 percent having face-to-face engagement. Synchronous learning is used the least with only 55 percent responding stating that it is used *some* or *very much*.

Exhibit 2-21
Student Survey Responses Related to Online Learning Formats

Which e-learning formats do most of your teacher(s) use and to what degree does he/she use them for instruction?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Face-to-Face	14%	19%	51%	16%
Synchronous (at a specific time each day)	28%	17%	47%	8%
Asynchronous (anytime during the day)	10%	13%	44%	32%

Source: OEQA- ECS Survey Results (2016)

It should be noted, however, that current Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC) limits the time virtual charter school teachers can have face-to-face interaction with their students. OAC 777:10-5-3 states, "... No statewide virtual charter school or employee of the statewide virtual charter school shall provide face-to-face instruction to any charter school student unless...The instruction is limited to no more than nine (9) hours per week of instruction per student." There are no such limits for brick and mortar public schools.

The U.S. Department of Education conducted a systematic search of the research literature from 1996 through July 2008 and identified more than a thousand empirical studies of online learning. Of those studies, a meta-analysis of 50 study effects, found that,

Instruction *combining online and face-to-face elements* had a larger advantage relative to purely face-to-face instruction than did purely online instruction. The mean effect size in studies comparing blended with face-to-face instruction was +0.35, $p < .001$. This effect size is larger than that for studies comparing purely online and purely face-to-face conditions, which had an average effect size of +0.05, $p = .46$. In fact, the learning outcomes for students in purely online conditions and those for students in purely face-to-face conditions were statistically equivalent. An important issue to keep in mind in reviewing these findings is that many studies did not attempt to equate (a) all the curriculum materials, (b) aspects of pedagogy and (c) learning time in the treatment and control conditions. Indeed, some authors asserted that it would be impossible to have done so. Hence, the observed advantage for blended learning conditions is not necessarily rooted in the media used per se and may reflect differences in content, pedagogy and learning time.²³

COMMENDATION

ECS is commended for providing several instructional delivery options to engage students in their online learning, specifically with Epic's unique 1-on-1 model (student to teacher) face-to-face interactions.

²³ This report is available on the Department's Web site at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports.html.

Evaluation of the Instructional Delivery Program

The instructional delivery program typically includes three cyclic stages, which involve planning, implementation, and evaluation. Most schools when enacting the third stage use only the measurement of student performance outcomes on mandated assessments. However, when conducting an evaluation of the instructional delivery program there should be a consideration of multiple measurements that are specific to all aspects of the program (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Measurements should focus on key indicators within the program such as:

- Its purpose: what the program is intended to achieve.
- Its inputs: the resources invested and activities carried out to achieve the goals.
- Its logic: the way the program is expected to achieve its goals.
- Its outputs: the program's activities/products, participants, and organization models.
- Its outcomes: the program's short-, intermediate-, and long-term impacts.
- The external factors that affect the program's ability to achieve its goals.²⁴

For purposes of this performance review of ECS's instructional delivery program, Blitz and Schulman's (2016) logic model is used to examine the schools' inputs, outputs, and outcomes of the instructional delivery program. The examination begins with this guided question, "Do these elements align to the school's central purposes for an online learning program?" The two elements observed (outputs and outcomes) are presented and defined below:

- ECS Outputs – the specific emphasis the school places on certain activities to promote strong student outcomes such as collaborative opportunities for students
- Outcomes - the short-, intermediate-, and long-term impacts of ECS's instructional delivery program that are measured through attitudes and beliefs, behaviors/practices, or performance indicators.

For purposes of evaluating ECS's instructional delivery program, an excerpt from the student survey was organized as a potential evaluation tool for measuring the outputs and outcomes. This survey tool presents a few of ECS activities as *outputs*, and students' perspectives on how well ECS instructional delivery program has contributed to their development as *outcomes*.

FINDING 2-15

When examining the student survey results (**Exhibit 2-22**) as a measurement tool for evaluating ECS's instructional delivery program, most students (average of 80 percent) felt that *some* or *very much* of seven instructional delivery outcomes have contributed to their development. While only 46 percent of the students perceived that 'working well with others to complete a task or project, the seventh outcome, contributed to their development.

²⁴ Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=444>

Exhibit 2-22
Sample for ECS Program Evaluation Measurement Tool

ECS OUTPUTS					
How much does your school emphasize each of the following?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much	Total Emphasis
Spending time preparing for standardized tests	9%	7%	32%	53%	85%
Participating in school events and activities (athletics, plays, academic competitions)	30%	28%	26%	16%	42%
Using technology tools (e.g., Google apps for education, virtual field trips, etc.) for class work.	7%	19%	39%	35%	74%
Furthering education or training beyond high school	16%	11%	35%	38%	73%
STUDENT OUTCOMES					
How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much	Total of school experiences contributing to student development
Acquiring skills for a job after completing high school.	13%	12%	41%	35%	76%
Thinking critically (reasoning, asking “Why”)	3%	19%	35%	43%	78%
Developing creative ideas and solutions	5%	12%	46%	37%	83%
Reading and understanding challenging materials	6%	9%	42%	43%	85%
Using technology to gather and communicate information.	4%	8%	38%	50%	88%
Developing career goals	14%	14%	40%	33%	73%
Working well with others to complete a task or project.	19%	35%	27%	19%	46%

Source: OEQA- ECS Survey Results (2016)

COMMENDATION

ECS is commended for an instructional delivery program that a majority of students perceive as contributing to their development on six of seven outcomes.

Although the sample measurement tool devised for the purposes of this review is simple and limited in providing a good picture of ECS's outputs, it does provide a working model that can and should be built upon for future program evaluation. It is recommended that ECS build upon this evaluation approach for determining the effectiveness of their instructional program delivery by creating a parent and staff instrument.

Instructional Technology

Technology is a tool that can change the nature of learning. Integrating technology into instruction means more than teaching basic computer skills and software programs in a separate computer class. Effective technology integration must happen across the curriculum in ways that research shows deepen and enhance the learning process. In particular, it must support four key

components of learning: active engagement, participation in groups, frequent interaction and feedback, and connection to real-world experts.

Technology can change the way teachers teach, offering online educators effective ways to reach different types of learners and assess student understanding through multiple means. It also enhances the relationship between teacher and student. When technology is effectively integrated into subject areas, teachers grow into roles of adviser, content expert, and coach. Effective technology integration is achieved when the use of technology is routine and transparent and when technology supports curricular goals.

FINDING 2-16

Most ECS students expressed a high level of interest for using technology tools such as personal devices and apps for completing assignments and engagement in class work. ECS has met that need by emphasizing the use of technology tools in class work. More importantly, students feel that ECS has contributed to their development in the use of technology.

Exhibit 2-23 provides information about ECS students' interest in using various technology tools in completing assignments or the use of those tools during the instructional delivery process. Students' interest in using technology tools in assignments was higher with an average of 64 percent having *some* or *very much* interest compared to 36 percent having *very little* or *no* interest. Also, 74 percent of students responded that their school emphasizes the use of technology tools for class work. Students acknowledged with a greater percentage (88 percent) that ECS has contributed to their development in using technology to gather and communicate information.

Exhibit 2-23
Student Survey Responses Related to Interests in Use of Technology Tools

How much do each of the following activities and assignments interest or engage you?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Teacher lectures (through video or other technological means)	10%	28%	50%	12%
Discussions and debates (online interactive formats such as google hangouts)	15%	28%	37%	21%
Projects and lessons involving personal device apps or other technology sources.	11%	17%	53%	20%
How much does your school emphasize each of the following?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Using technology tools (e.g., Google apps for education, virtual field trips, etc.) for class work.	7%	19%	39%	35%
How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Using technology to gather and communicate information.	4%	8%	38%	50%

Source: OEQA- ECS Survey Results (2016)

COMMENDATION

ECS is meeting individual student interests by emphasizing and integrating the use of technology tools into the instructional delivery process.

FINDING 2-17

ECS is successful in the employment of technology tools in the delivery of instruction as it matches individual student needs and interests. However, there appears to be a limited focus on the use of technology for promoting a community of learners through online collaborative interactions/projects.

Exhibit 2-24 presents student survey results related to students' interests in collaborative activities. As shown in the answer to the first question, there does not seem to be a high interest (10 percent) in group projects. In the second question, 54 percent of students felt the school had not contributed to their development in working with others to complete a task or project.

Exhibit 2-24 Survey Results as Related to Student Interests in Collaborative Activities

How much do each of the following activities and assignments interest or engage you?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Group projects through online technology.	34%	24%	33%	10%
How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Working well with others to complete a task or project.	19%	35%	27%	19%

Source: OEQA- ECS Survey Results (2016)

Exhibit 2-25 provides comments from the Student Survey related to their perspectives on how technology could be enhanced within the virtual classroom. Many of the comments focus on the level of interest for online collaborative opportunities. Survey results and comments suggest a wide variety in student interests in working with others in an online forum.

Exhibit 2-25 Student Survey Comments Related to Perspectives on Technology and Collaborative Opportunities

What suggestions would you like to offer to improve our school?	
Using video chats with a teacher or something like E2020	Have a way for students to get into live video calls with teachers of certain subjects
Make the videos a little more fun	I would like more opportunities to interact with my fellow classmates in social and virtual events
I'd like to do PowerPoint presentations more, I enjoy doing those.	Set an area or chat room for kids with the same teacher, to work together on some of the projects.
More opportunities to meet with other students and teachers especially on some subjects like biology/ sciences or art projects (photography) in groups. Things like that	Use more writing assignments and research projects and less lectures for students like me who are more of a hands on learner.
What do you like least about your virtual charter school?	
Flipping through power point slides gets mundane.	More interactions with other students (mentioned multiple times)

Source: OEQA- ECS Survey Results (2016)



In an effort to discover best-practices or promising practices for K-12 online teachers, a study (DiPietro, et al., 2008)²⁵ found, through triangulation of several data sources, multiple pedagogical strategies to improve student engagement. Among these strategies several pedagogical themes emerged related to the application of technology tools to enhance collaborative opportunities among the students. **Exhibit 2-26** provides a few of those themes as each is detailed according to a promising practice, description of that practice, and an exemplar (online teacher testimony) of that practice.

Exhibit 2-26
Practices for Using Technology to Enhance Collaborative Opportunities for Students

Practice	Description	Exemplar
Teachers were skilled in the basic use of technology.	Having skill with the basic uses of technology benefits instruction by knowing what tools are available in the course environment and their potential for supporting student learning.	“A virtual teacher must have knowledge of technology. Just to operate the management system for the course delivery requires training and practice.”
Teachers are interested in and enjoy exploring new technologies that have potential value for virtual school environments. Teachers continually extend their content and technological knowledge.	This practice indicates an interest in exploring the potential for using a variety of web-based technologies with the virtual school courses they teach. Teachers value being introduced to new strategies for teaching content and how that can meet the needs of diverse students enrolled in the course.	“Successful virtual school teachers must continually improve and continually educate themselves on the curriculum and the technology to provide the best opportunities for students.”
Practice	Description	Exemplar
Teachers use multiple strategies to form relationships that support rich interactions with students.	This practice represents a synthesis of statements made by participants that address the need to form strong relationships students enrolled in their virtual school course. Establishing and nurturing these relationships with students was discussed in terms of the impact it has on the quality of interaction in the course, as well as the formation of community.	“...each semester there is a collaborative learning unit - even though we’re going through a Flex course, they work in collaborative groups. I try to organize these groups based on ... ability level, gender, where the kids are from, and then ...each takes on a role. They have to discuss from their perspective, whether this should be done or not, and ...come to a group decision. Then they create PowerPoint presentations individually and then they get to see each other’s presentations and have to comment about the way people have presented their information...”
Teachers encourage and support communication between students.	This practice represents the value of encouraging student-student communication in a course. The value of encouraging these relationships was discussed in terms of the social climate that forms as a result and the opportunities offered by establishing a community of learners.	“Kids are going back, some of them are posting three, four times to a thread because they get engaged in the conversation, the material is interesting. But they talk about other things too like, football. Whatever it is about using the boards, it has the ability to make it (the content) very interesting for them.”

Source: *Best Practices in Teaching K-12 Online*²⁶

²⁵ Journal of Interactive Online Learning www.ncolr.org/jiol Volume 7, Number 1, Spring 2008

²⁶ Journal of Interactive Online Learning www.ncolr.org/jiol Volume 7, Number 1, Spring 2008



RECOMMENDATION

ECS faculty should employ the use of technology tools for facilitating collaborative project opportunities, which will enhance student engagement and development of college and career readiness skills.

When considering best practices for K-12 online education, practitioners need to adhere to some principles to guide their work. For example, virtual K-12 educators need to be able to modify the instructional practices and pedagogical techniques used in face-to-face settings for the online environment. This may involve online educators to develop skills to nurture interaction and communication with and among students during the online learning experience. This requires the utilization of pedagogical techniques that draw on and integrate the available technological tools to support student collaboration and knowledge acquisition (Ferdig, Cavanaugh, DiPietro, Black, and Dawson, 2009).²⁷

It was noted during the onsite visit that the administration uses Google Hangouts for interaction with one another as well as principals with teachers and Google Docs is used for collaborative processes among the staff. Yet, based on the feedback from the student surveys it would serve ECS well to investigate further into ensuring that students are provided the same opportunities to collaborate on projects with other students online. This would not be limited to only face-time (Google Hangouts) interactions, but in collaborative group projects. To ensure that students remain motivated and focused in their learning and gain the most from their interaction with other students and their instructors, appropriate strategies for learning activities need to be formulated and implemented.²⁸

Technological tools make it possible for students to collaborate with their instructors and peers for learning new skills and acquiring enhanced knowledge. Some examples are

- Proofhub²⁹
- Mindmeister³⁰
- Sliderocket³¹
- Big Marker³²

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

²⁷ <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ880563>

²⁸ <https://elearningindustry.com/6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning>

²⁹ https://www.proofhub.com/?utm_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm_source=%2F6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning&utm_medium=link

³⁰ https://www.mindmeister.com/?utm_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm_source=%2F6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning&utm_medium=link

³¹ <http://www.sliderocket.com/product/>

³² https://www.bigmarker.com/?utm_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm_source=%2F6-online-collaboration-tools-and-strategies-boosting-learning&utm_medium=link

Instructional Delivery & Local Assessments

Assessments include everything from statewide accountability tests to district benchmarks or interim tests to everyday classroom tests. In order to contend with what some feel to be an overuse of testing, educators should frame their view of testing as an opportunity to gain valuable information related to student learning of the content that has been taught. The more information we have about students, the clearer the picture we have about achievement or where gaps may occur. The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) explains that “in a balanced assessment system, both summative and formative assessments are an integral part of information gathering”.³³

Summative assessments are given periodically to determine at a particular point in time what students know and do not know. Summative assessment at the district/classroom level is an accountability measure that is generally used as part of the grading process. Below are some examples of summative assessments:

- State assessments (previously referred to as OCCTs and EOIs)
- District benchmark or interim assessments (STAR, Study Island...etc.)
- End-of-unit or chapter tests/ semester exams
- Scores that are used for accountability for schools (A-F Report Cards) and students (report card grades).

Formative Assessments are a critical part of the instructional process. Such assessments inform teachers about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made before it is too late. When integrated into daily practice formative assessments provide the information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening. These adjustments help to ensure students achieve targeted standards-based learning goals within a set time frame. AMLE gives an excellent frame of reference for formative assessments:

There are many classroom instructional strategies that are part of the repertoire of good teaching. When teachers use sound instructional practice for the purpose of gathering information on student learning, they are applying this information in a formative way. In this sense, formative assessment is pedagogy and clearly cannot be separated from instruction. It is what good teachers do. The distinction lies in what teachers actually do with the information they gather. How is it being used to inform instruction? How is it being shared with and engaging students? It's not teachers just collecting information/data on student learning; it's what they do with the information they collect.³⁴

FINDING 2-18

ECS has system-wide expectations and processes for effective use of summative and formative assessments for frequent monitoring of students. Input from interviews and focus group discussions indicated the teaching staff is very clear in the expectations and use of formative and

³³ <https://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/286/Formative-and-Summative-Assessments-in-the-Classroom.aspx>

³⁴ ibid



summative assessments. Some teachers referred to giving summative tests for grades at the end of a teaching segment and then moving to new content. Teachers were aware of the state's Blueprints and know how these documents are used to pace the content or use formative assessments to determine mastery.

Exhibit 2-27 highlights the competencies of ECS faculty in understanding the importance of assessments as they relate to curriculum development and the implementation of differentiated instructional strategies. As indicated in the exhibit, 90 percent or more of the surveyed staff *strongly agree* or *agree* that the use of assessments are used for adjusting curriculum, informing instruction, providing feedback, and ensuring student learning.

Exhibit 2-27
Staff Survey Results Concerning the Use of Assessments

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessments based on data from student assessments.	62%	32%	6%	0%	0%
Teachers provide students with specific and timely feedback about their learning.	43%	53%	3%	1%	0%
Teachers use multiple types of assessments to modify instruction and to revise the curriculum.	49%	45%	4%	2%	0%
Teachers adequately prepare students for state mandated assessments (OCCT, EOI).	54%	43%	3%	0%	0%

Source: OEQA- ECS Survey Results (2016)

COMMENDATION

ECS implements procedures and communicates expectations to ensure all teaching staff understands the important role assessments must have in the teaching and learning cycle and includes the application of both formative and summative assessments.

D. STUDENT PERFORMANCE & DATA ANALYSIS

Student Performance on State Assessments

Student assessment is an integral part of measuring student performance. The Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP) continues implementation of the current standards-based tests that students must take during the school year. Prior to the 2016-17 school year, those assessments were referred to as the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT) consisting of Criterion Referenced Tests (CRTs) designed to measure student attainment of skills established for core classes. The OCCT helps monitor student and school performance relative to the Oklahoma Academic Standards (OAS). Again, prior to the 2016-17 school year, the OSTP program used a phase-in process to increase tested grades and subjects. CRTs were administered in 3rd through 8th grade, and End of Instruction (EOI) exams were administered for selected high school courses



in this manner:

- third grade: Reading and Mathematics;
- fourth grade: Reading and Mathematics;
- fifth grade: Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Writing;
- sixth grade: Reading and Mathematics;
- seventh grade: Reading, Mathematics, and Geography;
- eighth grade: Reading, Mathematics, Science, US History, and Writing; and
- high school: End-Of-Instruction (EOI) tests in English II, English III, Biology I, US History, Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry.

All students in the tested grades and subjects must participate in the OSTP. The test results for all students who attend a Full Academic Year (FAY) and are “first opportunity EOI test takers” are included in the calculation of school and district grades in the Oklahoma A-F Grading System. Current administrative rules define "FAY" student, if the student is enrolled within the first twenty (20) instructional days of the school's instructional year through and including the date of administration of the exam, and has not experienced an enrollment lapse of ten (10) or more consecutive instructional days.

Student test scores fall into one of the following four categories:

- Advanced – Student demonstrates superior performance on challenging subject matter;
- Proficient – Student demonstrates mastery of appropriate grade level subject matter and is ready for the next grade, course, or level of education, as applicable;
- Limited Knowledge – Student demonstrates partial mastery of the essential knowledge and skills appropriate to his or her grade level, course, or level of education, as applicable; and
- Unsatisfactory – Student does not perform at least at the limited knowledge level.

To assist teachers and districts in teaching OAS and preparing students for the mandated assessments, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) provides a variety of resources on its website. These resources include the following:

- OAS by subject and grade level;
- test blueprints for each grade level and subject area test that show what percentage of the test each skill will represent;
- test/item specifications highlight important points about the items' emphasis, stimulus attributes, format, content limits, distracter domain, and sample test items;
- released test questions;
- writing samples;
- a list of words, called the academic vocabulary that are used on each test; and

- depth of knowledge (DOK) levels and percentage weights for all OCCT test questions in test specifications.

For comparison purposes, the OEQA selected three Oklahoma school districts as peer districts based upon size and percentage of economically disadvantaged students. Since there are no virtual peers for Epic at this time that are of similar size, three brick & mortar districts from **Community Group C2** were selected. ECS is compared to the state and peer districts' student performance data within this section. **Exhibit 2-28** provides a comparative look of ECS, the peer districts and the state's average for enrollment and percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

Exhibit 2-28
ECS, Peer Districts, and the State's Average Demographic Data
2015-16

Entity	Enrollment	Economically Disadvantaged
ECS	6,069	65%
Enid	8,044	71%
Muskogee	6,044	81%
Ponca City	5,185	69%
State Average	1,299	61%

Source: OEQA & SDE Data Services (2016)

Exhibit 2-29 shows Epic, the peer districts, and the state average for all *full academic year* third grade students. Among its peers, ECS had 54 percent passing, which was next to the highest among its peers and below the state's average. ECS third grade tied with 62 percent of students passing reading, which was tied for highest among the peer group, but still lower than the state's average.

Exhibit 2-29
Percentage of All Grade 3 Full Academic Year Students
Scoring Proficient or Above (2014-15)

Entity	Math	Reading
ECS	54%	62%
Enid	56%	62%
Muskogee	52%	59%
Ponca City	49%	61%
State	63%	70%

Source: Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Exhibit 2-30 compares fourth grade test scores. ECS had next to the highest percentage of students scoring proficient or above among the peers in reading and was the lowest among the peers in math. ECS was similar to its peers in that all were below the state's average in reading but ECS was the lowest among peers and below the state's average in math.

Exhibit 2-30
Percentage of All Grade 4 Full Academic Year Students
Scoring Proficient or Above (2014-15)

Entity	Math	Reading
ECS	56%	66%
Enid	70%	69%
Muskogee	73%	69%
Ponca City	69%	63%
State	63%	70%

Source: Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Exhibit 2-31 compares fifth grade test scores. In reading, ECS had the most students scoring proficient or above among the peers and the state average. ECS scored the lowest among peers and below the state average in math.

Exhibit 2-31
Percentage of All Grade 5 Full Academic Year Students
Scoring Proficient or Above (2014-15)

Entity	Math	Reading
ECS	60%	71%
Enid	65%	63%
Muskogee	65%	65%
Ponca City	67%	68%
State	63%	70%

Source: Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Exhibit 2-32 shows the results of sixth grade testing. ECS was second to the lowest in math, among the peers and lower than the state. ECS was second to the highest in reading among the peers while scoring above the state in reading.

Exhibit 2-32
Percentage of All Grade 6 Full Academic Year Students
Scoring Proficient or Above (2014-15)

Entity	Math	Reading
ECS	58%	71%
Enid	52%	56%
Muskogee	68%	62%
Ponca City	77%	78%
State	67%	64%

Source: Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Exhibit 2-33 displays results for all students in grade 7. ECS had next to the highest percentage of students scoring proficient or above among the peers and scored higher than the state average



in reading. In math, seventh grade students out-performed 3rd-6th grade ECS students, performed better than two peers, but were below the state average.

Exhibit 2-33
Percentage of All Grade 7 Full Academic Year Students
Scoring Proficient or Above (2014-15)

Entity	Math	Reading
ECS	61%	74%
Enid	49%	65%
Muskogee	57%	69%
Ponca City	82%	79%
State	67%	73%

Source: Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Exhibit 2-34 presents the results for all grade 8 full academic year students. ECS scored next to the lowest among the peers in math and below the state average. In reading ECS scored the lowest among all peers and the state average. This was the only time that ECS was below all peers in reading.

Exhibit 2-34
Percentage of All Grade 8 Full Academic Year Students
Scoring Proficient or Above (2014-15)

Entity	Math	Reading
ECS	33%	66%
Enid	28%	73%
Muskogee	36%	72%
Ponca City	65%	90%
State	55%	76%

Source: Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Exhibit 2-35 examines the EOI scores for Algebra I and English II. In English II, EVSC was the highest among peers and the state average in percentage of students scoring proficient or above. In Algebra I EVSC was next to the lowest among peers and below the state average.

Exhibit 2-35
Percentage of All Full Academic Year Students
Scoring Proficient or Above on EOI Tests (2014-15)

Entity	Algebra I	English II
ECS	61%	88%
Enid	62%	73%
Muskogee	56%	72%
Ponca City	67%	78%
State	78%	82%

Source: Office of Educational Quality and Accountability



A-F School Grading System

In 2011, the Oklahoma Legislature adopted the A-F School Grading System and at the time of this report, the system is still the subject of much statewide concern and conversation. The intent of the school reform legislation was to challenge schools to motivate all students to meet high levels of college and career readiness.

The A-F report card process gives schools data to highlight areas of success and determine areas that need improvement. The A-F School Grading System is also based upon the concept that parents and community members should be able to quickly and easily determine how schools are performing, making it a user-friendly way for parents to determine their child's school performance.

Currently a school's grades are based on:

- 50 percent on student achievement on the OSTP assessments;
- 25 percent on overall student growth; and
- 25 percent on student growth of the bottom 25 percent of students.

Depending on the school level, schools can also earn up to 10 bonus points for such things as graduation rate and year-to-year growth. At the elementary level, attendance is the only factor considered for bonus points.

ECS Elementary School's (grades PK-5) report card in 2014-15 is presented in **Exhibit 2-36**. The final grade was a 70, which receives the letter grade of C-. Most notable is the progress being made toward proficiency in ECS students' overall growth.



Exhibit 2-36
ECS Elementary School A-F Report Card 2014-15

Student Achievement (50%)			
Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
Reading	378	66	D
Mathematics/Algebra I	378	56	F
Science	110	58	F
Social Studies/Geography/US History	110	65	D
Overall Student Performance Grade	976	61	D
Overall Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency (25%)			
Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
Reading	184	75	C
Mathematics/Algebra I	185	69	D
Overall Student Growth Grade	369	72	C
Bottom Quartile Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency) (25%)			
Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
Reading	45	38	F
Mathematics/Algebra I	46	54	F
Overall Bottom Quartile Grade	91	46	F
Final Grade: 70 (C-) (including 10 bonus points)			

Source: SDE (2016)

Exhibit 2-37 provides a comparison of ECS Elementary School report card scores for 2014-15 with the peer districts. ECS was tied for a C- with two of the three peer districts.

Exhibit 2-37
ECS Elementary Comparison of A-F School Grading System with Peers

Entity	With Bonus Points		Without Bonus Points	
	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
ECS	70	C-	60	D-
*Enid	75	C	65	D
*Muskegee	71	C-	61	D-
*Ponca City	72	C-	62	D-

*All elementary school scores were averaged into one score
Source: OEQA calculations of the SDE A-F School Report Cards - 2016

In **Exhibit 2-38** ECS Middle School's A-F report card indicates a final grade of D (63 points). The exhibit clearly indicates a much stronger performance in reading than any of the other content areas.

Exhibit 2-38
ECS Middle School A-F Report Card 2014-15

Student Achievement (50%)			
Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
Reading	427	70	C
Mathematics/Algebra I	428	51	F
Science	159	50	F
Social Studies/Geography/US History	286	58	F
Overall Student Performance Grade	1300	59	F
Overall Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency (25%)			
Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
Reading	325	74	C
Mathematics/Algebra I	326	58	F
Overall Student Growth Grade	651	66	D
Bottom Quartile Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency) (25%)			
Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
Reading	80	33	F
Mathematics/Algebra I	81	37	F
Overall Bottom Quartile Grade	161	35	F
Final Grade: 63 (D) (including 8 bonus points)			

Source: SDE (2016)

Exhibit 2-39 provides a comparison of ECS Middle School report card scores for 2014-15 with the peer districts. ECS scored above one peer with bonus points and scored above two peers without bonus points. ECS middle school performance is within the performance range of two of three peers.

Exhibit 2-39
ECS Middle School Comparison of A-F School Grading System with Peers

Entity	2014-15		With Bonus Points		Without Bonus Points	
	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
ECS	63	D	55	F		
*Enid	64	D	54	F		
Muskogee	55	F	53	F		
*Ponca City	81	B-	73	D		

**All middle school scores were averaged into one score*

Source: OEQA calculations of the SDE A-F School Report Cards - 2016

In **Exhibit 2-40** ECS High School's A-F report card indicates a final grade of C (73 points). The exhibit clearly indicates a much stronger performance in English than any of the other content areas with History receiving a C on overall performance.

Exhibit 2-40
ECS High School A-F Report Card 2014-15

Student Achievement (50%)			
Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
English II/English III	362	89	B
Algebra I/Algebra II/ Geometry	452	59	F
Biology I	168	47	F
US History	243	71	C
Overall Student Performance Grade	1225	68	D
Overall Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency (25%))			
Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
English II	105	94	A
Algebra I	134	69	D
Overall Student Growth Grade	239	80	B
Bottom Quartile Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency) (25%)			
Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
English II	26	81	B
Algebra I	32	63	D
Overall Bottom Quartile Grade	58	71	C
Final Grade: 73 (C) (including 1 bonus point)			

Source: SDE - March, 2016

Exhibit 2-41 provides a comparison of ECS High School A-F report card scores for 2014-15 with the peer districts. As shown, ECS grade (C/73) was highest among peers with and without bonus points.

Exhibit 2-41
ECS High School Comparison of A-F School Grading System
2014-15

Entity	With Bonus Points		Without Bonus Points	
	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
Epic	73	C	72	C-
Enid	72	C-	71	C-
Muskogee	71	C-	69	D+
Ponca City	70	C-	69	D+

Source: SDE - March, 2016

Educational Planning and Assessment System

The ACT (originally an abbreviation of American College Testing), is a college readiness assessment for college admissions in the United States and specifically in the state of Oklahoma. It is produced by ACT, a nonprofit of the same name. The ACT assessment measures high school students' general educational development and their capability to complete college-level



work with the multiple choice tests covering four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science.

Exhibit 2-42 compares the trends in the district's ACT composite scores over time with peer districts. Beginning with a tie for the lowest ACT score in 2012 and ending with the highest ACT score in 2015. Epic's composite score increased over a four-year period with a 14.6 percent change. This was the most gains of any peer district. ECS composite score was also above the state average in three of the four years.

Exhibit 2-42
Trend in ACT Composite Scores for ECS and Peers

Entity	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Percentage Change
ECS	19.8	21.2	21.2	22.7	14.6%▲
Enid	21.2	21.2	20.5	20.5	(3.3%)▼
Muskogee	19.8	19.7	19.8	19.9	.51%▲
Ponca City	22.2	21.6	21.7	21.2	(4.5%)▼
State Average	20.7	20.8	20.7	20.7	0%

Source: Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, Profiles Database

FINDING 2-19

In addition to the ongoing monitoring and data analysis of student progress using formative assessments and benchmarks, there is consistent use of the OCCT/EOI student performance results. All administrative staff reviews the data with an in depth analysis at the central office level. Assessment results are then conveyed to the teachers by their principals. Once the teachers receive their data there is a standardized process for ensuring the teachers collaboratively (with principal) analyze the data and apply results to improve curriculum and instruction.

Exhibit 2-43 presents several questions administered to the staff related to using the OCCT/EOI outcomes. As shown, the survey results indicate that teachers have experience with reviewing end-of-year assessments. Eighty-nine percent or more of the survey respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they are trained in collecting, analyzing and using the data to inform instruction.



Exhibit 2-43
Staff Survey Responses Related to Data Analysis

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessments based on data from student assessments.	62%	32%	6%	0%	0%
Our district has a continuous improvement process based on data, goals, actions, and measures for growth.	74%	24%	3%	0%	0%
Our virtual charter school has a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and using student data.	67%	30%	3%	0%	0%
Our virtual charter school ensures that staff members are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	45%	44%	7%	3%	1%
Our virtual charter school uses data to monitor student readiness and success for the next level.	62%	35%	3%	0%	0%
Our district leaders monitor data related to district continuous improvement goals.	65%	32%	3%	0%	0%

Source: OEQA- ECS Survey Results (2016)

Disaggregating and analyzing student performance data appeared to be a common practice for ECS administration and faculty in order to serve each student. In the age of high-stakes testing, each individual student must be prepared for the next level of learning. It is important that teachers use performance data to develop awareness and understanding of the skill gaps in student performance. The use of data also results in improving the rigor, pacing, and articulation of curriculum and instruction. As teachers monitor performance data, patterns of individual student learning successes and challenges become evident.

Use of student data helps teachers identify problems and proactively design instruction to ensure that each student's learning gaps are addressed and that the student is progressing to the best of their abilities. It is essential for teachers to have ongoing data to measure learning at each instructional segment. This allows teachers to make informed, collaborative decisions to address potential problems, target student deficiencies, and adjust instruction to meet immediate learning needs.

COMMENDATION

ECS teachers and leaders possess the capacity for collecting and analyzing student data to design instruction and remediation and to ensure that there is consistent implementation using a system-wide process.

FINDING 2-20

ECS has taken several proactive steps for increasing student performance on the ACT assessment. Each assessed content area of the ACT has improved over time. The consistent review and analysis of data in all content areas may have contributed to this continuous improvement.

Exhibit 2-44 provides an overview in each of the four content areas assessed. ECS has experienced an increase in scores in each of the assessed content areas over the past four years. The state average has only increased in the content area of reading, decreased in mathematics and English while remaining at 20.7 in Science.

Exhibit 2-44
ACT Content Scores for ECS and the State Over Time

Year	English		Mathematics		Reading		Science	
	ECS	State	ECS	State	ECS	State	ECS	State
2011-12	20.2	20.4	17.8	20.1	21.5	21.3	19.8	20.7
2012-13	20.9	20.4	19.1	20.1	23.1	21.4	21.2	20.8
2013-14	21.1	20.3	19.6	19.9	22.2	21.5	21.2	20.7
2014-15	22.7	20.1	21.1	19.8	24.4	21.5	22.7	20.7
Percent Change	12.3% ▲	(1.5%) ▼	19.0% ▲	(1.5%) ▼	13.5% ▲	.93% ▲	14.6% ▲	0%

Source: Epic Data Files (2016)

COMMENDATION

ECS leadership and faculty are commended for their efforts in developing a system focused on continuous improvement, which has increased student performance results on the ACT over time.

FINDING 2-21

Administration and faculty were open about the weaknesses in ECS students' math performance. The staff is well aware of the challenges facing them due to the complications presented when rapid enrollment exceeds available resources and capacity. The OEQA consultants found that the administration was quick to respond to this problem with various actionable strategies.

While onsite, it was revealed to the OEQA consulting team during interviews and focus group sessions, that several strategic actions were put into place in an effort to counteract any those variables (e.g. rapid enrollment growth) that were negatively affecting students' math performance. **Exhibit 2-45** provides a sampling of those actions that were put into place to increase students' math performance.

Exhibit 2-45
ECS Strategic Actions for Increasing Students' Math Performance

Central Office Administration Level
Hired a math coach to provide Professional Development for all teachers via videos
Math Coach designed a math tool that was put on YouTube (over 14,000 views at the time of onsite visit)
Contracted with a company to provide 24/7 tutoring services
Created Epic University – PD online for teachers and other staff (new PD is added throughout the year)
Central Administration (Supt., Asst. Superintendents, & Principals) meets weekly for RYG meetings to review the data for all regions – monitoring student progress. Data is analyzed and students are either in the red/yellow/ or green performance group.
Provides a Data Center (Epicenter) this ensures the availability of the State's Standards blueprints for math
Provides quarterly benchmarks (NWEA) with reports for principals and teachers to review
Multiple Math Curriculums are provided (e.g. Study Island, Teaching Textbooks, etc.)
Hiring additional Teacher Developers for regular and special education teachers
Principal Level
Recalibration meetings – each principal meets with his/her assigned teachers (one-on-one) to discourse student achievement in all academic areas. Review consists of students' status - if they are participating in the 24/7 tutoring; or the targeted tutoring for grades 3-12. Discourse consists of strategies to try.
Teacher Level
Customize the curriculum to the child / differentiating the curriculum
Use of the Scope & Sequence as well as the Blueprints for preparing students for the assessments (OCCT & EOI).
Bridge the quarterly benchmark results to choice of instructional delivery through online curriculum programs such as Study Island.
Meeting with students f2f weekly or bi-weekly (21 day maximum)

Source: OEQA Interview/Focus Group Notes (2016)

COMMENDATION

ECS leadership is commended for their efforts in developing and implementing actionable strategies to improve students' math performance.

FINDING 2-22

ECS students' math scores, overall, have been consistently weak as indicated on multiple metrics including the state's OCCT/EOI assessments and the state's A-F report card. Although ECS made concerted efforts this past year in boosting student's math performance the results for the 2015-16 realized only a 1 percentage point gain (total proficient) from the previous year.

Exhibit 2-46 provides a detailed report of students' math performance on the OCCTs in grades 3-8 and for Algebra I EOI over a three-year span. The performance represents all students (test takers) who have attended ECS for a full academic year. Although there appeared to be an overall increase in math performance between 2014 and 2015, a considerable dip in performance in four of the seven math levels occurred in 2016.

Exhibit 2-46
ECS OCCT & EOI Math Scores
All Students Full Academic Year Over Time

Grade	2013-14	2014-15	Percentage Point Change 2014 to 2015	2015-16	Percentage Point Change 2015 to 2016
Third grade	42%	54%	12 pp ▲	45%	-9 pp ▼
Fourth grade	30%	56%	26 pp ▲	49%	-7 pp ▼
Fifth grade	45%	60%	15 pp ▲	59%	-1 pp ▼
Sixth grade	52%	58%	6 pp ▲	61%	3 pp ▲
Seventh grade	39%	61%	22 pp ▲	59%	-2 pp ▼
Eighth grade	38%	33%	-5 pp ▼	40%	7 pp ▲
Algebra I	52%	61%	9 pp ▲	73%	12 pp ▲
Number Proficient <	372/ Total Test Takers	485/ 900		606 / 1103	
Total % Proficient <	42%	54%	12 pp ▲	55%	1 pp ▲

Source: Epic Data Files (2016)

Exhibit 2-47 focuses on Math from the A-F report card student achievement section for elementary, middle school, and high school from the past three years. The most common change that occurred at each school level for all three years was the exponential growth in test takers. For elementary and middle school this growth may have contributed to the significant decrease in the performance index in 2013-14. The following year (2014-15) the performance index increased as did the continuous rapid growth.

Exhibit 2-47
ECS A-F Report Card
Three-Year High School EOI Math Performance

Elementary Math Grades 3-5			
Year	Number of Students Assessed	Performance Index	Letter Grade
2012-13	183	54	F
2013-14	346	39	F
2014-15	378	56	F
Change 2013 to 2015	195▲	2▲	No difference
Middle School Math Grades 6-8			
Year	Number of Students Assessed	Performance Index	Letter Grade
2012-13	257	58	F
2013-14	443	44	F
2014-15	428	51	F
Change 2013 to 2015	171▲	-7▼	No difference
Algebra I/Algebra II/Geometry EOI			
Year	Number of Students Assessed	Performance Index	Letter Grade
2012-13	147	59	F
2013-14	335	62	D
2014-15	452	59	F
Change 2013 to 2015	305▲	No difference	No difference

Source: SDE - March, 2016



OEQA consulting team analyzed the survey comments, interview and focus group notes for emerging themes related to math performance and math instruction that appeared to be working well/or not so well for students, parents, and teaching staff. **Exhibit 2-48** provides a sampling of those comments and the associated themes.

Exhibit 2-48
Comments Related to Math

Emerging Themes Related to ECS Student Performances on Math Assessments		
Themes	Description	Exemplar
Communication	The rapid growth has intensified communication breakdown at some levels. Due to the isolation of learning and teaching in a virtual environment, communication must take on a stronger focus among all stakeholders to ensure student success.	Teacher: “The most challenging aspect of working at Epic is that you are typically working in isolation. As an educator in a virtual environment one must take extra steps to create a collaborative learning environment in which to support your fellow peers and bounce ideas for student learning around.”
Tutoring	Tutoring programs available are beneficial for students in grades 3-12 in all subjects but specifically for math. Review of the exemplars by the central administration to determine evaluative processes to improve the tutoring may increase user satisfaction.	Student: “Have more meet ups for students who struggle with like math and science to talk with people who are understanding the material. Have a way for students to get into live video calls with teachers of certain subjects, for example, a math teacher, as an explanation from virtual tutoring sometimes is just not enough and takes up too much time for me and other students. Student: “For students like myself that struggle with math to have it explained in a couple different ways better tutoring system. Parent: “I like the Skype/Hangouts/FaceTime tutoring sessions better for accountability and making the most of the hour they are with the tutor.”
Professional Development & Staffing	ECS has acquired a math specialist intentionally for the purposes of providing math assistance to teachers and students via videos. The number of Teacher Developers has increased to assist teachers with providing improved instruction in the core subjects such as math. Administration should consider increasing contact time with teachers during PLC collaborative times.	Teacher: “I would like to see a more work from specialist in each core area like we saw with math this year. It was a huge help.”

Source: OEQQA Matrix – ECS Survey Results (2016)

RECOMMENDATION

Review current strategies using collected data from this review to revise and strengthen the math program while simultaneously increasing professional development and PLC collaborative face-to-face time focused on the new math standards and their execution.



As indicated in the interviews and review of survey comments, ECS has made impressive efforts toward instituting improvement strategies to increase students' math performance. These efforts should continue, howbeit, should be informed with data collected from this review and possibly with new collected data (further surveys focused only on math). ECS leadership planning team (representation from all stakeholder levels) should focus on relevant and actionable strategies, which may include:

- Developing a survey focused only on math inputs and outcomes. Administer it to four layers of stakeholders (administrative staff, teaching staff, parents, and students).
- Reviewing all collected data:
 - qualitative – Comments from each of the surveys administered (both OEQQA and ECS survey)
 - quantitative – ratios of teacher developers and math specialists to teachers; student math performance data – trends seen within this report also peer comparisons
- Evaluating the current math program components – what is working and not working so well?
 - Ratios – is there a sufficient number of teacher developers for each region; or a sufficient number of math specialists per math field (e.g. algebra, geometry, calculus, and trigonometry)?
 - Professional Development – how many classes are available for teachers via Epic University for capacity building in the area of math instruction; what is the number of face-to-face opportunities for teacher developers/math specialists to meet with teachers in collaborative PLC settings?
 - Tutoring – are the tutoring vendors (e.g. FEV, 24/7, and additional tutoring vendors listed) meeting the needs of students? What data support that these tutoring venues are appropriate and productive?
 - Curriculum – what math curriculums seem to be producing the strongest results? Are there enough data collected to determine the answer this query?
- Creating Pacing Calendars – to ensure curricular alignment, pacing calendars should be created based on the new math standards, blue prints, and item specifications (see example on page 2-18 exhibit 2-15 of this review).

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

E. SPECIAL PROGRAMS

School districts offer educational services to students through a variety of programs including regular education programs and special programs. Special programs are designed to provide quality services for student populations such as those in Special Education, Gifted and Talented Education, and English Language Learner (ELL) programs.

Special Education

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, Part B is the federal law that supports special education and related service programming for children and youth with disabilities ages three through 21. The major purposes of IDEA are:

- to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living;
- to ensure that the rights of children and youth with disabilities and their parents are protected; and
- to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities.

Oklahoma statutes require that each school district shall provide special education and related services for all children with disabilities who reside in that district in accordance with *IDEA*. This duty may be satisfied by:

- directly providing special education for such children;
- joining in a cooperative program with another district or districts to provide special education for such children;
- joining in a written agreement with a private or public institution, licensed residential child care and treatment facility, or day treatment facility within such district to provide special education for children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, children who are blind or partially blind, or other eligible children with disabilities; or
- transferring eligible children and youth with disabilities to other school districts pursuant to the provisions of the *Education Open Transfer Act*.

Districts must develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each child receiving special education services under *IDEA*. The IEP must include input from the parent, special education teacher, specialists, and regular education teachers and be aligned with education plans for children in regular education classrooms.

The reauthorization of *IDEA* in 2004, which went into effect in July 2005, includes provisions significantly changing the way learning-disabled students are identified. One change in the law addresses early intervention services and creating opportunities to determine a student's Response to Intervention (RtI). This approach was adopted in 2010 by SDE. With RtI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes; monitor student progress; provide evidence-based interventions; and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness. Based on the results of these interventions, the district may need a referral for additional testing to determine if there is a specific learning disability.

IDEA allows a school district to use up to 15 percent of its *IDEA* allocation to support services to students who have not been identified as needing special education services but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in a general education environment. Funds may be used for professional development in scientific research-based interventions,

literacy instruction, and the use of adaptive or instructional technology. It also permits use of funds for educational and behavioral assessments.

An effective special education program is defined by *IDEA* as having the following elements:

- pre-referral intervention in regular education;
- referral to special education for evaluation;
- comprehensive nondiscriminatory evaluation;
- initial placement through an IEP meeting;
- provision of educational services and supports according to a written IEP;
- annual program review;
- three-year re-evaluation; and
- dismissal from the special education program.

Exhibit 2-49 shows comparison data on the percentage of special education students and number of full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in special education for 2014-15. ECS had the lowest percentage of students being served in special education and the lowest number of special education teachers among the peers yet higher than the state average. For the number of student-to-teacher ratio, ECS was the highest among the peers and the state average.

Exhibit 2-49
Students and Teachers in Special Education Programs
2014-15

Entity	Percentage of All Students	# of Special Education Teacher FTEs	# of Special Education Students per FTE
Epic	8.0%	11.9	29.3
Enid	13.2%	66.9	15.4
Muskogee	14.3%	38.8	21.9
Ponca City	17.3%	37.8	23.2
State Average	15.4%	8.5	23.5

Source: OEQA, Profiles Database

Exhibit 2-50 provides a comparison of ECS expenditures on special education with those of the peer districts. ECS had the largest percentage increase from 2013-14 to 2014-15 for expenditures and the largest percentage increase for students served among peers and peer average. However, ECS served the lowest number of special education students among peer districts during 2014-15 school year.

Exhibit 2-50
Special Education Expenditure Comparison
2013-14 and 2014-15

Entity	Total Expenditures 2013-14	Total Expenditures 2014-15	Percent Change	Number of Students 2013-14	Number of Students 2014-15	Percent Change
ECS	\$1,031,366.00	\$2,908,264.00	182.0%▲	267	566	112.0%▲
Enid	\$8,051,227.00	\$8,263,125.00	2.6%▲	1,039	1,066	2.6%▲
Muskogee	\$4,300,799.00	\$4,591,690.00	6.8%▲	879	882	0.3%▲
Ponca City	\$4,443,379.00	\$4,408,481.00	(0.8%)▼	932	907	(2.7%)▼
Peer Average	\$5,598,468.33	\$5,754,432.00	2.8%▲	950	952	0.2%▲

Source: OCAS District Impact Aid Letters and OEQA calculations (2016)

FINDING 2-23

Based on survey results, interviews and focus group comments, there seems to be a high satisfaction with the services provided for special education students attending ECS. **Exhibit 2-51** represents staff and parent responses related to their perceptions of the special education program. Eighty-five percent of staff *strongly agree or agree* that ECS provides related support services for all students based on their learning needs. Parent responses were similar with 83 percent of parents who *strongly agree or agree* that their child has access to support services based on his/her identified needs.

Exhibit 2-51
Survey Results Regarding Special Education

Staff Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In our district, related learning support services (Special Ed, ELL, etc.) are provided for all students based on their needs.	44%	41%	13%	1%	1%
Parent Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child has access to support services based on his/her identified needs.	46%	37%	11%	4%	2%

Source: OEQA- ECS Survey Results (2016)

COMMENDATION

ECS special education staff is commended for providing special education students with a program that has instilled a growing confidence from parents and colleagues within the district.



FINDING 2-24

Although the satisfaction ratings of ECS's special education services are impressive, there is insufficient information for appropriate program evaluation based upon student performance data. In review of the Group Summary: Performance Levels spreadsheet developed by a third-party vendor for ECS based upon the State Department of Education's OCCT Group Summary Report, there is not enough relevant information provided to allow for gap analysis comparing the performance of Full Academic Year (FAY) Regular Education students and FAY IEP students. When reviewing student testing results for each grade/subject, there should always be provision for comparing the performance of FAY Regular Education students with FAY IEP students.

In examining the Group Summary: Performance Levels spreadsheet one finds that performance for only FAY All students (Regular, IEP and ELL combined) is reported. Likewise the Regular Education summary line combines FAY and NFAY results. This lack of disaggregated data prevents school leaders and teachers (both regular and special education) from identifying any true change in student performance.

In this virtual charter school, as in most virtual charters, mobility is significantly higher than what brick and mortar schools experience. In order to make an appropriate evaluation of the special education program it is critical to look at the performance of FAY students by category for determining the impact of ECS on student performance. With that in mind, it must be understood that providing complete reports offers the most utility to practitioners and is a *must* for evaluating a special education program's effectiveness.

OEQA consultants used the last two years' performance level reports (provided by ECS) in an attempt to evaluate the performance of the ECS special education program. However, as explained above, these reports combine FAY and NFAY students. In review of the information in **Exhibit 2-52**, IEP students show no growth except in fifth grade math. This reporting approach, however, is incomplete and may conceal growth in some areas if FAY and NFAY students' performance could be evaluated separately. In order to make informed decisions regarding the special education program leaders should have the most complete data set at their disposal.



Exhibit 2-52
Percent of ECS IEP Students' Scoring Proficient or Above
2014-15 and 2015-16 OCCTs Math & Reading (FAY & NFAY combined)

Grade/Subject	2014-15	2015-16	Change in Percentage Points (pp)
Third Grade Math	*NA	17%	NA
Third Grade Reading	*NA	14%	NA
Fourth Grade Math	33%	24%	-9 pp ▼
Fourth Grade Reading	29%	28%	-1 pp ▼
Fifth Grade Math	11%	23%	+12 pp ▲
Fifth Grade Reading	22%	21%	-1 pp ▼

*NA – Third Grade Report did not include IEP Students

RECOMMENDATION

ECS leadership must make a point to request that all assessment reports formulated for diagnostic purposes provide the most detailed and disaggregated data set which would include separate listings for FAY Regular Education, NFAY Regular Education, FAY Special Education and NFAY Special Education.

ECS should revise their group summary report to reflect student group outcomes that can be used to measure performance growth specifically within the FAY category. With revised student performance summary reports, the school leadership will be able to make decisions regarding the special education program based on students' growth overtime.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

F. STUDENT SERVICES

Student services normally encompass counseling, health services and social services in most Oklahoma districts. The services provided may include:

- College and career counseling
- Health education and health services
- Substance abuse and psychological counseling

Recently, these services have played a more important role in helping students cope with the complexities of today's world. The role of the educational community in providing needed assistance for career and individual needs will continue to grow in future years.

Counseling and Guidance Services

The Oklahoma State Board of Education Accreditation Standards for guidance and counseling are:

- *Accreditation Standard 6.02.* The counseling staff, parents, administrators, and others shall provide guidance and counseling program direction through involvement in assessment and identification of student needs.
- *Accreditation Standard 6.04.* The school shall develop a written description of a guidance and counseling program with special provisions for at-risk students. The program shall address assessed needs of all students, including those who are identified as at-risk and shall establish program goals, objectives, and evaluation.
- *Accreditation Standard 6.06.* Each school shall provide an organized program of guidance and counseling services that include: counseling services available to students; a planned sequential program of guidance activities that enhance students' development; appropriate referrals to other specialized persons, clinics, or agencies in the community; and coordinated services.
- *Accreditation Standard 6.08.* Each counselor shall follow a planned calendar of activities based upon established program goals and provide direct and indirect services to students, teachers, and/or parents.

The SDE publishes *The School Counselor's Guide: Developing a Comprehensive School Counseling Program Using Accreditation Standard VI*. This publication is designed to assist school districts in strengthening existing programs or developing new ones. The major components of the defined guidance curriculum include Guidance Curriculum Domains (Academic Development, Career Development, and Personal/Social Development); Student Competencies; and Guidance Curriculum Delivery.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) states:

School counseling programs are collaborative efforts benefiting students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the overall community. School counseling programs should be an integral part of students' daily educational environment and school counselors should be partners in student achievement.

ASCA recommends that school counselors divide time between four components:

- Guidance Curriculum – The guidance curriculum is structured developmental lessons designed to assist students. The guidance curriculum is infused throughout the school's overall curriculum and presented systematically through K-12 classrooms.
- Individual Student Planning – School counselors coordinate ongoing activities designed to assist students individually in planning.
- Responsive Services – Responsive services are activities meeting individual students'



immediate needs that may require counseling.

- Systems Support – School counseling programs require administration and management.

FINDING 2-25

Although ECS provides students, parents, and teachers *The Counselor's Corner* on its website with access to a plethora of additional guidance information it appears that this does not sufficiently address the guidance counseling needs or awareness of stakeholders. ECS does not provide the traditional full-time face-to-face certified guidance counselor for students; rather, there is one Director for Graduation Support (certified counselor) who provides guidance counseling through the virtual forum. This virtual approach, via ECS website and other means of communication³⁵, has not garnered a high level of acknowledgment by staff or parents that this support is available.

Exhibit 2-53 shows that 63 percent of the staff *strongly agrees* or *agrees* there are adequate counseling services for students enrolled in ECS. Surprisingly, thirty-two percent of staff had *no opinion* and only five percent *disagreed* that there is quality counseling services at ECS. In addition, 65 percent of staff *strongly agree* or *agree* that students receive information for college entrance requirements and scholarships while 26 percent had *no opinion* and 10 percent *disagree* or *strongly disagree*. Only 58 percent of parents *strongly agree* or *agree* the counseling services were of quality while 34 percent had *no opinion* and seven percent *disagree* or *strongly disagree*.

Exhibit 2-53
Epic Charter School Staff & Parent Survey Results
Regarding Counseling Services

Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our virtual charter school provides high quality student support services (e.g., counseling, referrals, educational and career planning).	26%	37%	32%	5%	0%
Students receive timely information on college entrance requirements and scholarship offers.	24%	41%	26%	9%	1%
Parent Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our virtual charter school provides excellent student support services (e.g., counseling, and /or career planning).	27%	31%	34%	4%	3%

Source: OEQA - ECS Survey Results (2016)

The *Counselor's Corner* has an impressive list of resources to benefit students, parents, and teachers such as information concerning local Career Techs across the state, graduation

³⁵ <http://epiccharterschools.org/academic-counseling>

information, assessments, and scholarships. This webpage also allows students and/or parents to complete an online form to request assistance in the area of counseling – both guidance and therapeutic. Despite this valuable resource, many have no opinion about these services. There are a multitude of reasons why teachers and parents answered *no opinion* or even disagreed with the quality of services. In order to discover the reasons, OEQA reviewed interview and focus group transcripts as well as coding comments from the surveys to elicit some possible answers. **Exhibit 2-54** presents sample comments from the staff, parent, and student surveys and interviews related to the guidance counseling services at ECS.

Exhibit 2-54
Sample Comments Related to the ECS Guidance Counseling Services

Staff Sample Comments
Behavioral and counseling services other than education or curriculum driven counseling/guidance
I also think our families would benefit from beefing up our counseling/GSM department.
The graduation support management department and its ability for accurate and timely information
Parent Sample Comments
More guidance should be given on college prep.
... get a really good high school counselor, career advisor. We have asked and received no help with college prep, it has all been on our own.
Lack of telling us or giving us information on free resources we have.
More clear and extensive information for new students/parents.
I didn't like being called to plan out next year and the person who called me not knowing the actual credits taken and needed for graduation.
Realize that every student can't go to college and that technical schools are viable alternatives. Notify parents that if their child would like to attend technical schools, what they need to do to get them enrolled in time. Be advocates for them like public schools are for their students.
Not enough...counselor and career planning
Student Sample Comments
I think that it would be helpful for the school to help students gather information about college.

Source: OEQA Transcripts and ECS Survey Results (2016)

RECOMMENDATION

Significantly increase staff, parents, and students' awareness of the online Counselor's Corner; then conduct an analysis of counseling needs to ensure the website addresses those needs.

ECS should invest in a campaign to communicate to all staff, parents, and students the valuable resources available online. Design the website so that the *Counselor's Corner* is visible as well as accessible. At this time there are several clicks to arrive at the *Counselor's Corner*. Update the *Counselor's Corner* so that old information is removed and new information is inserted.

A thorough analysis of the counseling needs for students in Epic Charter School should be conducted to determine how ECS will be able to provide an increased counseling program to students via the online venue. Based on student need, ECS should define what themes emerged from the analysis and ensure that the more pronounced needs are addressed immediately online and other virtual forums.



FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 2-26

ECS provides students with extra guidance support with the graduate support management program. Within this program there are six graduation support managers (GSM) trained to assist students in career/college graduation support. The GSMS are under the supervision of the Director of Graduation Support. These employees are not certified counselors, but serve as graduation liaisons ensuring students are on track and on time for graduation.

The Parent/Student Handbook describes the GSM program indicating that “Each teacher is assigned a GSM. Graduation Support Managers will team with the teachers to guide each student through graduation. GSMS facilitate to students through their teachers the options available for graduation success”. At the time of the onsite visit, the Director of Student Services and the GSM team described some of the activities that were occurring during the month of May. Those activities included:

- Creating fall schedules for students – goal was 75 schedules created per week per GSM
- Calling parents to discuss students aspirations for college or career
- Ensuring student records have been obtained and credits are earned for graduation

COMMENDATION

ECS is commended for adding an extra layer of support with the graduate management support system in an effort to ensure students are on track and on time for graduation.

FINDING 2-27

The exponential growth of ECS has limited the positive effects of the graduate management support program by increasing the ratio of students and teachers per GSM. At the time of the OEQA onsite visit there were only six GSMS with one assigned to elementary and five assigned to secondary. The ideal ratio that ECS was attempting to accomplish was 300 to 400 students per GSM at the secondary level. However, the GSM assigned to the sophomore grade level was responsible for 700 students. It was noted that he/she was provided assistance by other GSMS as needed.

The limited number of GSMS for the growing enrollment was certainly a topic during interviews with teacher focus groups. It was noted that teachers were also carrying the burden of some of the GSM responsibilities. In survey comments the theme of GSM problems arose frequently. **Exhibit 2-55** provides comments from the staff surveys.

Exhibit 2-55
Comments from Surveys Regarding the Graduate Support Management

Staff Comments (What do you like least about your Virtual Charter District?)
GSM department
I also think our families would benefit from beefing up our counseling/GSM department. Having GSMS that are knowledgeable about concurrent enrollment, scholarship opportunities, career planning, etc. is vital in helping our students to transition from high school to post high school.
The graduation support management department and its ability for accurate and timely information
Staff Comments (What is one suggestion you would like to offer to improve your Virtual Charter District?)
Having support staff to the GSM's that are direct teacher mentors for new staff that spends scheduled one on one time with the new staff to better equip them in their first year of teaching.
Better communication from GSM department and working at a quicker pace from GSM's so that students aren't put in touch predicaments their senior year.
Offer grade specific or age specific graduation support managers that are knowledgeable for those specific needs of students in that age/grade level.

Source: OEQA - ECS Survey Results (2016)

RECOMMENDATION

Continue with the extra support that the graduate support management program provides, but hire an additional GSM to ensure an equitable ratio of 400 to 450:1 at each grade level in high school.

Since best practices for implementing a successful guidance counseling program recommends 450:1 ratio in the brick and mortar schools then ECS should strive for this ratio at each grade level of high school. Many of the comments and concerns from survey respondents and focus group participants pinpointed the need for better communication with the GSMS. Effective communication can be restricted when workers are overburdened with caseloads that are too large. Distributing the caseloads more equitably should improve the communication between students and teachers and their assigned GSM. With the continued growth at ECS staffing of this program should be a consideration within the budget planning.

FISCAL IMPACT

Assuming the GSM is coded as registrar on the SDE personnel reports, the annual salary of a GSM is approximately \$36,000 per year.

Recommendation	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Hire an additional GSM worker as needed to ensure a 300-400:1 ratio at each high school grade level (9-12).	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)	(\$36,000)

Chapter 3:

Business Operations

Chapter 3

Business Operations

This chapter addresses the business operations of Epic Charter Schools (ECS) and is divided into the following sections:

- A. Planning, Budgeting, and Financial Processes
- B. Purchasing
- C. Asset and Risk Management

Financial, asset, and risk management in school districts require thoughtful planning and decision-making. Public school districts must meet or exceed increasingly rigorous academic standards without exceeding their budgetary resources. The superintendent and governing board must ensure that the district receives all available revenue from state and federal sources and expends those funds in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and policies so that the district can best meet or exceed the established academic standards.

Background

Charter schools are funded differently than other public schools. Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 states, “The governing body of a charter school may not levy taxes or issue bonds.” Because charter schools receive no local revenue, the vast majority of their funding comes from State Aid and is based on average daily membership (ADM). Furthermore, unlike other public schools and brick and mortar charter schools, virtual charter schools’ initial State Aid allocation is derived from the number of enrolled students on August 1st of each year.

Title 70 O.S. § 18-200.1 allows the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) to subtract certain local revenue, called chargeable income, from a school district’s State Aid allocation. This chargeable income includes property valuation, gross production taxes, and motor vehicle tax collections. Because charter schools do not receive local revenue, this chargeable income is not subtracted from charter schools’ State Aid allocation. In regard to other public schools and brick and mortar charter schools, Title 70 O.S. § 18-201.1 states, “The weighted calculations...shall be based on the highest weighted average daily membership of the first nine (9) weeks of the current school year, the preceding school year or the second preceding school year of a school district, unless otherwise specified. The highest of the three (3) weighted average daily memberships shall be used consistently in all of the calculations...”

The law is different for virtual charter schools. Title 70 O.S. § 3-142 states, “...the weighted average daily membership for the first year of operation and each year thereafter of a full-time virtual charter school shall be determined by multiplying the actual enrollment of students as of August 1 by 1.333...At midyear, the allocation for the full-time virtual charter school shall be adjusted using the first quarter weighted average daily membership for the virtual charter school.”



While all public schools, that receive State Aid, typically receive a midyear adjustment to their State Aid allocation, virtual charter schools often receive a greater percentage amount than other public schools. This is due to virtual charter schools' initial allocation being based on a fixed weight of 1.333. Once all the weights are calculated after the first quarter, the virtual charter schools' weighted ADM frequently is greater than 1.333. Along with any increase in student membership after August 1st, the increased weight leads to additional state revenue at midyear.

Exhibit 3-1 shows the percentage breakdown of revenue from local and county, state, and federal sources for ECS, other virtual charter schools, and the State. With no local revenue, ECS and all other virtual charter schools receive the bulk of their revenue from State Aid. It should be noted that totals do not equal 100% due to rounding and some revenue (e.g. district, state categorical, etc.) not accounted for below.

Exhibit 3-1
Breakdown of Revenues by Source
2014-15

Entity	Local and County	State Revenue	Federal Revenue
ECS	0%	91%	7%
Insight School of OK	0%	99%	0.1%
OK Connections Academy	0%	77%	0%
OK Virtual Charter Academy	0%	93%	5%
State	40.8%	47.7%	11.6%

Source: OEQA, Profiles Database; SDE, OCAS Reports

Public schools and brick and mortar charter schools may receive transportation funding based on average daily haul and a codified transportation factor. Average daily haul is the number of students in a district that live one and one-half miles or more from a school site. Because virtual charter school districts encompass the entire state of Oklahoma, specific administrative rules govern their transportation funding.

Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC) 777:10-5-3(d) states, “A statewide virtual charter school shall not be eligible to receive transportation supplement funding for transportation to a statewide virtual charter school site...for any school year without a written transportation plan approved by the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board. The statewide virtual charter school shall submit its approved transportation plan to the State Department of Education Office of State Aid no later than July 1 prior to the school year for which the transportation plan has been approved.” At the time of this review, no virtual charter school had received approval for a transportation plan.

Public schools and brick and mortar charter schools typically receive funding from the SDE for Child Nutrition Programs. Title 70 O.S. § 3-119 states, “Funds appropriated to the State Board of Education for School Lunch Matching and School Lunch Programs shall be apportioned by the State Board of Education to each school district for the purpose of providing meals for children in compliance with the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 and Public Law 91-248, as they may hereafter be amended or supplemented.” At the time of this review, no virtual charter school had received Child Nutrition funds from the SDE.

Evidence from a large number of reviews shows that many school districts do not receive enough transportation or Child Nutrition funds to cover the cost of these services. Currently, virtual charter schools do not receive these funds but also do not bear the cost of these services. If these services were to be provided and the funds allocated by the SDE, virtual charter schools' revenues and expenditures would be impacted.

Oklahoma Cost Accounting System

Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 states, “A charter school, to the extent possible, shall be subject to the same reporting requirements, financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as a school district. The State Department of Education (SDE) or State Auditor and Inspector may conduct financial, program, or compliance audits. A charter school shall use the Oklahoma Cost Accounting System (OCAS) to report financial transactions to the sponsoring school district...” Policies and procedures set forth in OCAS describe the basis of funding of Oklahoma public schools, the duties and procedures for the financial operations of the district, and the role of the SDE and the district in receiving, dispensing, reporting, and accounting for school funds.

Governing boards, administrators, business managers, encumbrance clerks, treasurers, independent auditors, and other parties with responsibilities for school budgets and the administration of school district funds must be familiar with OCAS policies and procedures. Title 70 O.S. § 3-136 further states, “No later than September 1 each year, the governing board of each charter school formed pursuant to the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act shall prepare a statement of actual income and expenditures for the charter school for the fiscal year that ended on the preceding June 30... statement of expenditures shall include functional categories as defined in rules adopted by the State Board of Education to implement the Oklahoma Cost Accounting System ...Charter schools shall not be permitted to submit estimates of expenditures or prorated amounts to fulfill the requirements...”

Exhibit 3-2 below shows the revenue and expenditures reported via OCAS by ECS for school years 2011-12 to 2014-15. OCAS reports for school year 2015-16 were not yet available when this review was completed; however, ECS provided an internal fiscal document that showed projected revenue and expenditures for school year 2015-16. ECS revenues and expenditures increased each year as ADM also increased. Per Pupil Expenditures (PPE) also saw an increase overall.

ECS spent far less than the State Average for all public schools each year; however, it should be noted that virtual charter schools do not receive any local funding and also lack Child Nutrition, Transportation, and many activity fund revenues and expenditures, which are included in the State Average. Thus with only State, Federal, and some district revenue and without various expenditures (e.g. Child Nutrition, Transportation, etc.), ECS expenditures are less than half of the state average.



Exhibit 3-2
OCAS Reported Revenue and Expenditures

School Year	Revenue	Expenditures	ADM	PPE	State Avg. PPE
2011-2012	\$ 6,284,804	\$ 5,911,568	1,518	\$ 3,895	\$ 9,220
2012-2013	\$ 8,886,665	\$ 9,263,767	1,885	\$ 4,915	\$ 9,320
2013-2014	\$14,443,851	\$ 12,980,279	2,916	\$ 4,451	\$ 9,605
2014-2015	\$22,381,938	\$ 19,100,975	3,907	\$ 4,889	\$ 9,664
2015-2016	\$30,200,638	\$ 28,768,245	5,759	\$ 4,995	Not Available

Source: SDE, OCAS Reports; Internal ECS Document dated March 2016

Exhibit 3-3 below shows the percentage of 2014-15 expenditures by function. ECS pays salary and benefits to employees and also purchases services through contracts with various vendors and its charter management organization, Epic Youth Services, LLC (EYS). Other virtual charter schools are managed by national organizations, and thus purchase services, such as staff and curriculum, from those organizations. Furthermore, charter schools are not required to follow state minimum salary schedules. These facts, along with other funding and regulatory differences, make it difficult to compare virtual charter school expenditures by function with State Averages.

Exhibit 3-3
Percentage Breakdown of 2014-15 Expenditures by Function

Entity	Salaries	Benefits	Purchased Services	Supplies	Property	Other
ECS	37.9%	9.6%	51.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.3%
Insight School of OK	0.0%	0.0%	97.1%	2.2%	0.0%	0.8%
OK Connections Academy	0.0%	0.0%	70.8%	29.0%	0.0%	0.1%
OK Virtual Charter Academy	0.0%	0.0%	84.9%	14.8%	0.0%	0.2%
State	45.6%	15.1%	13.1%	10.2%	4.2%	10.1%

Source: SDE, OCAS Reports

EYS, as the charter management organization, is paid for its services by the ECS governing board. The contract, dated July 2014, states, “EYS shall be responsible and accountable to the BOARD for the administration, operation, and performance of the Charter School in accordance with the Charter and this Agreement.” EYS also provides development services that include assistance with the charter application process, recruitment of staff and students, and procurement activities. EYS receives \$125,000 for these development services. EYS receives a further payment in the form of an Indirect Cost Allocation. This allocation amount is equal to ten percent of the charter school’s revenue, as defined in the contract.

Fund Balance

The fund balance, often referred to as “carryover,” is defined as the excess of assets over liabilities and is used in future years to offset any revenue shortfalls or negative midyear adjustments that may occur. Fund balance is seen as the amount of cash that is not set aside for purchase orders, contracts, outstanding warrants, or other obligations. A school district’s fund balance policy can provide guidance for the development and implementation of an annual budget.

As shown in the **Exhibit 3-2** above, ECS expends fewer dollars than are received as revenue each year. Because virtual charter schools receive their initial State Aid allocation based on August 1st enrollments each year and a fixed ADM weight of 1.333, these schools must wait until the midyear adjustment to receive their full weighted ADM for all students on their rosters between August 1st and October 1st. With less revenue to expend between August and January, it is in the best interest of the virtual charter schools to maintain a healthy end-of-year fund balance to carry over into the next school year.

Title 70 O.S. § 3-142 states regarding charter schools, “Any unexpended funds may be reserved and used for future purposes”. **Exhibit 3-4** shows carryover amounts from school years 2011-12 to 2014-15. ECS has grown its carryover amount each year. Other virtual charter schools either are only recently in operation or have just begun to maintain a carryover. For 2014-15, ECS carried over roughly ten percent of its 2013-14 revenue. By comparison but not shown below, the carryover percentage, in General Revenue, for the same period for all public schools was roughly seven percent.

Exhibit 3-4
Carryover Amounts by Year

Entity	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
ECS	\$91,999	\$357,194	\$1,181,626	\$1,463,572
Insight School of OK	Not in Operation	Not in Operation	Not in Operation	\$0
OK Connections Academy	Not in Operation	Not in Operation	Not in Operation	\$0
OK Virtual Charter Academy	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$70,927

Source: SDE, OCAS Reports

A. PLANNING, BUDGETING, AND FINANCIAL PROCESSES

Day-to-day financial processes should be efficient and effective. They should also be documented, transparent, and rational. Accounting and payroll are among the most important business functions performed by a school district. Although regulations and other accounting standards exist, actual practices can vary widely throughout the state.



A sound accounting and payroll system can provide numerous benefits including:

- providing internal controls and safeguards;
- providing timely reporting on the status of funds; and
- allowing systematic disbursements to maximize available funds.

FINDING 3-1

Interviews, survey results, and a review of the EYS contract show that stakeholders have little input into the budgetary process of ECS. The contract between the ECS governing board and EYS states, “EYS shall provide the BOARD with an annual projected Budget...The Budget shall be prepared by EYS and submitted to the BOARD for approval, which approval shall not be unreasonably withheld or delayed.”

Exhibit 3-5 below shows the responses from 128 ECS staff regarding the budgetary process and grant writing. A slight majority of the respondents had no opinion on the statement, “...stakeholders are invited to provide input into the budgetary process”. Though not specifically related to the budgetary process a majority of respondents had no opinion on the statement, “...school actively applies for competitive state/federal grants and other grant opportunities”. Taken together, these responses may show a lack of understanding and/or input into the budgetary process.

Exhibit 3-5
ECS Staff Survey Results Related to Budgetary Process and Grant Writing

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Virtual charter school stakeholders are invited to provide input into the budgetary process.	15%	24%	51%	9%	2%
The virtual charter school actively applies for competitive state /federal grants and other grant opportunities.	17%	17%	64%	2%	0%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2015)

RECOMMENDATION

Include greater stakeholder input in and communication regarding the budgetary process annually.

Though charter schools are not required to follow the School District Budget Act, it does, “make available to the public and investors sufficient information as to the financial conditions, requirements, and expectations of the school district”. Title 70 O.S. § 5-155 states, “The school district governing body shall hold a public hearing on the proposed budget within forty-five (45) days preceding the beginning of the budget year...shall make available a sufficient number of copies of the proposed budget as the governing body shall determine and shall have them

available for review or for distribution at the office of the chief financial officer. At the public hearing on the budget any person may present to the governing body comments, recommendations or information on any part of the proposed budget". Following a process similar to that described above will allow for greater stakeholder input in the budgetary process and help to communicate the budget to interested parties.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 3-2

Exhibit 3-6 below shows the responses from 128 ECS staff regarding the salary schedule and payment of stipends. A majority of the respondents agree that they understand the salary schedule and justification for payment of performance stipends. A small percentage of respondents have no opinion or disagree with the survey statement.

Exhibit 3-6
ECS Staff Survey Results Related Salary and Performance Stipends

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I understand the district's salary schedule and justification for paying performance stipends.	49%	39%	9%	3%	1%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2015)

ECS provides direct deposit of payroll warrants for all employees. Interviews and documentation confirm that all employees are paid via direct deposit. This practice is efficient for both employees and the district.

Direct deposit expedites the availability of funds to the employees' bank accounts, reduces the possibility of warrants being lost or stolen, and is efficient for district staff. Direct deposit benefits both the organization and its employees. A school district benefits because bank account reconciliation is made simpler and funds are debited from an organization's account on a precisely known date. The district also enjoys reduced processing costs because direct deposited warrants eliminate the need to print and distribute hard copy payroll warrants. Direct deposit saves employees time spent in making trips to the banks; moreover, electronically transferred funds are generally available immediately.

COMMENDATION

ECS provides direct deposit for its employees, and all staff participates.



B. PURCHASING

Purchasing in a school district is performed by the district encumbrance clerk, and the encumbrance clerk cannot be a board member, administrator or teacher employed by the district. An encumbrance clerk is a support employee that should have a definite job description and defined job duties as established by the superintendent and local board of education. The following are job duties and responsibilities of a typical encumbrance clerk:

- Keep district financial records and associated documents;
- Enter received appropriations in the appropriate account record(s);
- Complete requisitions and receive approval according to district procedures;
- Upon requisition approval, encumber funds accordingly and generate purchase orders for approval and issuance;
- Verify receipt ordered of goods and services from receiving employee by signed invoice or affidavit;
- Receive bill for goods or services into the record, verify bill amount against invoice and/or statement amount;
- Pay the billing vendor from encumbered funds by following district procedures for payment approval and warrant issuance; and,
- Reconcile district deposit and payment records against account records maintained by bank.

Exhibit 3-7 below shows the responses from 128 ECS staff regarding the perception of district administrators' and board members' compliance with policies, procedures, laws, and regulations. A majority of the respondents agree with the survey statement. A small percentage of respondents have no opinion or disagree with the survey statement. Though the perceptions are not specific to business operations, they do provide insight into the overall operations of ECS.

Exhibit 3-7 **ECS Staff Survey Results Related Compliance with Policies, Procedures, etc.**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our district administrators and district board complies with all policies, procedures, laws, and regulations.	63%	27%	8%	2%	0%

Source: OEQA - Epic Survey Results (2015)

FINDING 3-3

ECS has clear purchasing procedures in place. Interviews determined that purchasing procedures are defined and followed. The contract between the ECS governing board and EYS states, “EYS shall assist the BOARD in identifying and procuring such suitable materials, furniture, fixtures, equipment and supplies as may be necessary to the operation of the Charter School.” Furthermore, the independent auditor’s report from CBEW Professional Group, LLP dated July 23, 2015 found no material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, or noncompliance related to internal controls.

COMMENDATION

ECS has clear purchasing procedures, which are followed by pertinent staff.

C. ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Asset management involves managing the district’s cash resources and physical assets in a cost effective and efficient manner. Effective cash and investment management involves accurately forecasting cash requirements (both amount and date) so that funds may be made available when they are needed. Effective asset management involves the safeguarding of property from loss, damage, theft, and obsolescence. Proper safeguarding of district assets requires an effective system of accountability and a culture of adherence to established policies and procedures.

OAC 210:40-87-6 states, “Each charter school shall be required to furnish and maintain liability insurance coverage and fidelity bonding of the same terms, conditions, types and amounts required of public schools under Oklahoma law...Charter school officers and/or employees shall be required to furnish and maintain surety bonds with the same terms, conditions, penalty, types and amounts required of public school officers and/or employees under Oklahoma law.”

The CBEW Professional Group, LLC stated regarding school year 2014-2015, “EPIC purchases commercial insurance to cover these risks...commercial property - \$2,000,000; general liability - \$1,000,000; and educators [sic] liability \$1,000,000.” This auditor’s report further stated, “At June 30, 2015, EPIC held deposits of approximately \$4,267,557 at financial institutions. EPIC’s cash deposits, including interest-bearing certificates of deposits, are entirely covered by Federal Depository Insurance...” The independent auditor’s report further states, “The officers, employees and members are bonded...for the penal sum of \$100,000...”

FINDING 3-4

ECS has no investment policy to maximize revenue. The independent auditor’s report from CBEW Professional Group, LLP dated July 23, 2015 states, “EPIC does not have a formal investment policy that limits investment maturities as a means of managing its exposure to fair value losses arising from increasing interest rates.” ECS limits its investment choices to those listed in state law, and invested its \$4,267,557 in a Money Market fund as of June 30, 2015.



RECOMMENDATION

Develop a policy to invest funds in certificates of deposit and government-backed bonds.

Though school districts are limited on their investment options, maximizing the rates of return can assist districts in generating revenue. A sound investment policy that seeks to maximize returns should be developed and approved by the ECS governing board. As interest rates begin to rise in the future, this policy could generate additional revenue for ECS.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources and may generate additional revenue.

FINDING 3-5

ECS keeps an accurate inventory of laptop computers and related hardware. As a virtual charter school, laptop computers and the related hardware are vital in fulfilling its mission. Documents and interviews determined that ECS maintains detailed and accurate records of its equipment, computers, and hardware. For example, a nearly 200-page inventory list provided by ECS and dated April 25, 2016 shows asset tag numbers and descriptions of ECS office equipment and furniture. The list also documents thousands of technology items such as laptop computers and iPads.

COMMENDATION

ECS maintains accurate and detailed inventory lists of equipment, laptop computers, and related hardware.

Chapter 4:

Facilities Use and Management

Chapter 4

Facilities Use and Management

This chapter addresses the facilities use and management of Epic Charter Schools (ECS) in the following sections:

- A. Facilities Planning and Construction
- B. Maintenance and Custodial Operations
- C. Energy Management
- D. Safety and Security

Facilities use and management includes the planning, construction, and maintenance of buildings, the safety of students and staff using those buildings, and the security of facilities before, during, and after school hours. More specifically, this area includes the following:

- planning and designing facilities to meet educational standards and to provide a physical framework that enhances learning conditions;
- properly maintaining and cleaning facilities so that teaching and learning can take place in a healthy and clean environment;
- ensuring that the facilities are safe when students and teachers are present;
- creating proper safeguards to ensure the security of the facilities after school hours; and
- having safety plans in the event of a crisis or natural disaster so that students and staff members are protected.

Background

ECS is Oklahoma's largest Virtual Charter School with an enrollment that is expected to exceed 10,000 students in grades PK through 12 during the upcoming school year of 2016-17. ECS's headquarters is in northwest Oklahoma City (**Exhibit 4-1**), but their students are located in cities and towns across the state.

ECS has two additional facilities, one in north Oklahoma City and one in east Tulsa. They contain facilities for large group testing, as well as facilities for special education instruction and therapy (**Exhibit 4-2**).

All ECS facilities are leased properties. ECS has management agreements with the landlords and these contracts not only include all maintenance and custodial care, but also, all utilities.

Exhibit 4-1
Epic Charter Schools Headquarters in Northwest Oklahoma City



Source: Prepared by OEQA from GoogleEarth & OEQA photographs, 2016

Exhibit 4-2
ECS's Oklahoma City & Tulsa Special Education and Testing Centers



Source: OEQA, 2016

A. FACILITIES PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION

Well-planned facilities are based upon the educational program and on accurate student enrollment projections. The design process should have input from stakeholders including administrators, principals, teachers, security specialists, parents, students, and the maintenance and operations staff.

Having a long-range facilities master plan will ensure that building projects are prioritized, begun, and completed according to a studied, developed, and logical process. As administrators, faculty, staff, and school board members change, having a long-range facilities master plan will add stability and cohesiveness to the district's construction, use, and management of facilities.

A school district's long-range facilities master plan is a compilation of district policies, information, and statistical data that provide a basis for providing educational facilities to meet the changing needs of a wide range of students. A valuable resource in developing a quality long-range facilities master plan can be obtained from the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI).¹

FINDING 4-1

Community Strategies, Inc. (the governing board) has hired Epic Youth Services, LLC (EYS) as a management company to operate ECS. EYS does engage in strategic master planning for ECS on behalf of Community Strategies, Inc., however, the planning efforts primarily involve only EYS personnel. The board should be more engaged in these strategic master planning efforts and the process should be more transparent and expanded so as to include representatives from stakeholder groups.

School boards, in the traditional sense, are usually a diverse group of people that have been elected by their district's patrons to serve as the "body corporate" for the local school district. This service involves hiring administrative, instructional and support staff and establishing policy to serve as operational guidance for district administration. It is not uncommon for school districts to hire architectural groups or consulting firms to guide or facilitate their board's strategic master planning efforts. In these efforts they explore their district's vision, mission, organizational structure, skill and resource requirements, legal requirements, instructional delivery methods, projected enrollment, program expansion, facility needs, staffing needs, support services, financial needs, goals, action plans, desired outcomes and measures of success.

The board that oversees the operations of ECS, Community Strategies, Inc., is different in that they formed of their own accord, and ECS was already in operation. Its authorization for operation was grandfathered in after-the-fact when legislation created Oklahoma's Statewide Virtual Charter Schools Board. With the grandfathered authorization to operate being secured, the board hired EYS as the management company to provide a district superintendent along with

¹ Council of Educational Facility Planners International. (2004). *Creating Connections: The CEFPI Guide for Educational Facility Planning*. Contact Edi Francesconi to purchase a copy (phone number is 480.391.0840).

turnkey operation of ECS. As operationalized, the superintendent provided by EYS, is also co-founder of the LLC. While the governing board approves ECS's strategic master plan and is free to modify the plan and/or be as involved in the process as desired, the co-founders of EYS have been primarily responsible for strategic master planning efforts that have occurred to date regarding ECS.

RECOMMENDATION

The governing board of Epic Charter Schools, Community Strategies, Inc., should be more involved and engaged in the strategic master planning efforts for the school, and additional stakeholder groups should also be included in the strategic master planning process.

Virtual charter schools operated by and for private entities and that function as public schools using public monies are fairly new to the state of Oklahoma. The once clear lines between public and private are now somewhat blurred, especially when it comes to strategic master planning for a virtual charter school. ECS is certainly a public school and it should still be considered a best practice to have the governing board of the district and representatives from stakeholder groups involved in strategic master planning efforts. When public monies are going to be expended, transparency must be a foremost consideration.

To this end, engaging board members with Community Strategies along with representative students, parents and teachers in strategic master planning discussions should be a worthwhile endeavor. Their participation in the process would greatly broaden the perspective of the planning group and they could provide very helpful insight and input on how to better serve student needs and improve student engagement, performance and retention. Board members and representatives of these stakeholder groups would have first-hand knowledge regarding the school's vision, mission, organizational structure, skill and resource requirements, staffing needs, support services, instructional delivery methods, student goals, desired outcomes and measures of success.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 4-2

ECS operates from three leased facilities, two in Oklahoma City and one in Tulsa. The administration building is one of the facilities in Oklahoma City with the other two both providing accommodations for large group testing, special education and therapy, one in Oklahoma City the other in Tulsa.

The administration building is a very practical, commercial office facility which also includes a well-connected conference room space for the quarterly governing board meetings and other physical and/or web-based gatherings.

The testing and special education center in Oklahoma City is a product of both adaptive reuse and facility sharing. The commercial building was first a roller rink, then a health club, and now a church/education center. It is primarily the education center portion of the building that is shared by ECS and a small nondenominational church. The education center is understated from the outside but the interior accommodations are welcoming, flexible, and well suited for the school's needs (**Exhibits 4-3 through 4-6**).

Exhibit 4-3
Entrance Lobby for ECS's Testing and Special Education Center in OKC

Source: OEQA, May 2016
Exhibit 4-4
Main Hallway in ECS's Testing and Special Education Center in OKC

Source: OEQA, May 2016
Exhibit 4-5
Room Set-up for Testing at ECS's Testing and Special Education Center in OKC

Source: OEQA, May 2016
Exhibit 4-6
Typical Classroom at ECS's Testing and Special Education Center in OKC

Source: OEQA, May 2016

COMMENDATION

The testing and special education center in Oklahoma City is a good example of both adaptive reuse and facility sharing.

B. MAINTENANCE AND CUSTODIAL OPERATIONS

The objective in maintaining and cleaning school facilities is to provide safe and cost-effective buildings, a sound educational environment, increased longevity of buildings and equipment, and the protection of school property. The efficient and effective maintenance and cleaning of school facilities provides a safe and secure environment that supports the educational program and reflects proper stewardship of district resources.

Efficiencies and economies of maintenance and cleaning are critical to ensure that resources for direct instruction are maximized. However, extreme actions to reduce the cost of maintenance and cleaning can result in higher than acceptable costs of repair and replacement in the years to come. Consequently, a balance must be achieved between reasonable economies and irresponsible cost-cutting.

Maintenance

The proper maintenance of facilities is critical to ensuring support for an effective instructional program. Research has shown that appropriate heating and cooling levels, building and room appearances, the condition of restrooms and other facilities, as well as occupant safety, all impact how students and staff members are able to carry out their respective responsibilities.

Ineffective or inadequate maintenance provisions have proven to lead to increased costs of facility operations by shortening the useful life span of equipment and buildings. Many school districts have adopted rigorous preventive maintenance programs. They maintain a record of the performance of equipment and the costs of regular maintenance in order to measure the effectiveness of these programs.

Custodial Operations

Safe, clean, and sanitary facilities are essential elements of the education environment. School systems across the United States use different means to address these elements. Typically, school boards either contract out (outsource) custodial services or organize a comprehensive in-house system of services. Personnel may be employed by either the outsourced company or the school board.

Management responsibility, if the program is completely in-house, may reside partially or wholly with the central office, the individual school, or housekeeping/custodial department. Determining the desired structure usually involves a number of criteria, including minimizing costs to the school district, improving services to schools, and reducing (or increasing) the span of control of district or school-based administrators.

Levels of cleanliness in facilities need to be defined by district staff with community input. Although not a nationwide standard, the following criteria have been advanced to assist in those decisions:

- Level 1 cleaning results in a “spotless” building, as might normally be found in a hospital environment or corporate suite. At this level, a custodian with proper supplies and tools can clean approximately 10,000 to 11,000 square feet in an eight-hour period.

- Level 2 cleaning is the uppermost standard for most school cleaning, and is generally reserved for restrooms, special education areas, kindergarten areas, or child nutrition areas. A custodian can clean approximately 18,000 to 20,000 square feet in an eight-hour shift.
- Level 3 cleaning is the norm for most school facilities such as hallways, general purpose classrooms and administrative offices. It is acceptable to most stakeholders and does not pose any health issues. A custodian can clean approximately 28,000 to 31,000 square feet in eight hours.
- Level 4 cleaning is not normally acceptable in a school environment. Classrooms would be cleaned every other day, carpets would be vacuumed every third day, and dusting would occur once a month. At this level, a custodian can clean 45,000 to 50,000 square feet in eight hours.
- Level 5 cleaning can rapidly lead to an unhealthy situation. Trash cans might be emptied and carpets vacuumed on a weekly basis. One custodian can clean 85,000 to 90,000 square feet in an eight-hour period.

FINDING 4-3

There are a number of facility concerns at the administration building for ECS, and the school does not have anyone assigned to be the school's liaison to the landlord or property management company.

ECS's administration building, located at 4101 Northwest 122nd Street in Oklahoma City, is a leased facility from the 4101 Limited Partnership. First Perimeter Center Management, Inc. has been hired by 4101 Limited Partnership to manage the property on their behalf. While it is assuring to know that the leased property is being "managed" it would be unwise for ECS to think they have no role in maintenance or management of the property. The concerns cited under Safety and Security later in this chapter show the need for increased attention by ECS and additional communication with the property management company and/or landlord from ECS personnel acting in a liaison capacity.

RECOMMENDATION

Outline landlord/property management company liaison duties and assign them to an administrative staff member in order to better maintain building safety.

While maintaining building safety and upkeep is not the responsibility of ECS proper (these duties are the responsibility of the landlord or property management company), ECS is still responsible for the safety and welfare of its employees and visitors and should keep a "watchful eye" with regard to building safety and upkeep. Unsafe or unkempt situations should be noted and reported to the landlord and/or property management company by whatever school staff member is assigned liaison duties. This liaison should then make note when and if these items are attended to by the landlord/property management company.



If ECS were to pursue a best practice in this area, then the liaison would conduct a routine maintenance and custodial building inspection once or twice a year. This would ensure that the leased facilities are being well-kept and are in good repair. Maintenance and custodial checklists abound on the internet, and a sample checklist is provided in **Exhibit 4-7**, below.

Exhibit 4-7
Sample – Maintenance & Custodial Checklist

Maintenance & Custodial Checklist							
Rooms and Offices	OK	Not OK	Comment	Bathrooms	OK	Not OK	Comment
Ceiling				Ceiling			
Lights (ballasts and covers)				Lights			
HVAC supply and return vents				Exhaust Fan			
Walls				Walls			
Blinds				Shelves			
Windows and screens				Counter Tops			
Black boards and marker boards				Sink / Faucets			
Lockers and shelves				Soap Dispensers			
Trash / Recycle Can				Towel Dispensers			
Sinks and counter tops				Partitions			
HVAC filters				Partition Doors			
Floors				Tissue Dispensers			
Furniture				Trash / Recycle Can			
Glides on desks and chairs				Blinds / Shades			
Doors (frame, glass, hinges, knobs)				Mirrors			
Maps, bulletin boards, and screens				Windows / Locks			
Ledges and all horizontal surfaces				Doors & Glass			
Hallways	OK	Not OK	Comment	Floors			
Ceiling				Floor Drains			
Lights (ballasts and covers)				Baseboards / Corners			
HVAC supply and return vents				Heating System			
Walls				Toilets / Valves			
Blinds				Urinals / Valves			
Windows and screens				Sanitary Dispensers			
Emergency egress lights							
Fire extinguishers							
Fire doors							
Exit signs							
Water fountains							
Lockers and shelves							
Bulletin boards							
HVAC filters							
Floors							
Mats and walk-off rugs							
Doors (frame, glass, hinges, knobs)							

Source: OEQQA

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

C. ENERGY MANAGEMENT

General energy consumption can be one of the most expensive operational items of a school. Due to the large infrastructure required for education, schools use large quantities of electricity, natural gas and water. Significant savings can be achieved by implementing an energy management program that reduces utility consumption.

Energy management programs can be implemented in a wide variety of ways, from hiring full-time energy managers to sending out simple shut-down reminders before school dismissal or before a break. One of the most beneficial practices of energy management is the recording of monthly utility bills and the communication of use and costs to the general staff. Tracking utility use can give a bird's eye view of how much each school facility is spending on its utilities compared to other school facilities. The energy manager can then target the most extensive and/or expensive utility use and work to reduce consumption. This communication helps foster awareness of the expenses of running a school and lead attention to energy conservation measures by both students and staff.

The American Society for Hospital Engineers (ASHE) has developed a list of ten components necessary for a successful energy management program. Although this list was originally intended for hospital organizations, it is applicable to all energy management programs. As recommended by ASHE, the items to consider are:

1. Measure/benchmark current energy consumption.
2. Develop an energy use profile.
3. Complete a greenhouse gas emissions inventory.
4. Build teams, get leadership support, and assign dedicated resources.
5. Set targets/goals.
6. Develop strategic action plans for improvement.
7. Consider adopting a strategic energy management plan.
8. Implement projects.
9. Track, measure, report.
10. Train, educate, and celebrate.

The Association of School Business Officials (ASBO), in their publication *Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities*² suggests that the following guidelines will help a school system accomplish more efficient energy management:

- Establish an energy policy with specific goals and objectives.
- Assign someone to be responsible for the district's energy management program and give this energy manager access to top-level administrators.

² Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003347.pdf>

- Monitor each building's energy use.
- Conduct energy audits in all buildings to identify energy inefficient units.
- Institute performance contracting (i.e., contracts requiring desired results rather than simply a list of needed products) when replacing older, energy inefficient equipment.
- Reward employees of schools or buildings that decrease their energy use.
- Install energy efficient equipment including power factor correction units, electronic ballasts, high-efficiency lamps, set-back thermostats, and variable-speed drives for large motors and pumps.
- Install motion detectors that turn lights on when a room is occupied and off when the room is unoccupied.

Additional information about energy management can be found through the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities' Energy Page³ which provides a list of links, books, and journal articles on various methods of heating, cooling, and maintaining new and retrofitted K-12 school buildings and grounds.

FINDING 4-4

The landlord's property management company does employ some components of an energy management program (EMP) such as set-back thermostats, dual-flush toilets and on-demand water heaters (**Exhibits 4-8 through 4-10**).

Exhibit 4-8

Use of Set-Back Thermostats can Conserve Energy and Save Money for ECS



Source: OEQA, May 2016

Exhibit 4-9

Use of Dual-Flush Toilets can Conserve Water and Save Money for ECS



Source: OEQA, May 2016

³ Available at <http://www.ncef.org/rl/energy.cfm>

Exhibit 4-10
On-Demand Water Heaters at Epic's
Testing and Special Education Center in OKC



Source: OEQA

COMMENDATION

The landlord's property management company does employ some components of an energy management program (EMP) such as set-back thermostats and dual-flush toilets.

FINDING 4-5

ECS has structured their leasing agreement with 4101 Limited Partnership and First Perimeter Center Management, Inc. so that all utilities will be included as a part of their monthly lease payment. While this is very convenient for the school, there was no evidence that these charges are itemized or that anyone from ECS or EYS monitors monthly utility consumption in an attempt to detect billing errors, equipment malfunction or in consideration of lowering energy use and its commensurate cost.

RECOMMENDATION

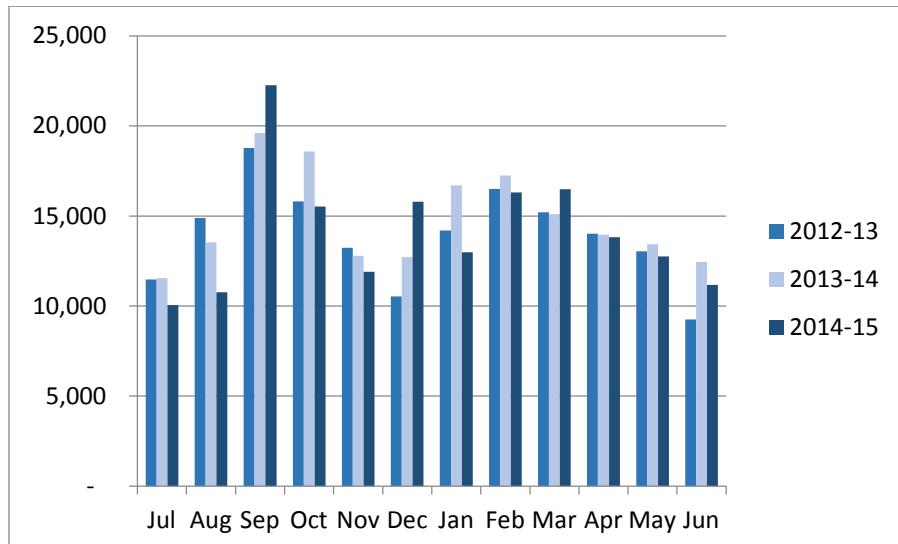
As was the case for maintaining building safety, ECS should include some basic energy management duties in the job description for the accounts payable clerk or whatever administrative staff member takes on the landlord/property management company liaison duties.

Someone with ECS should be tasked with keeping a running record and chart of each monthly utility bill in an effort to detect billing errors, equipment malfunction, to lower energy use and create a culture of conservation. Billing errors occur more often than expected and equipment malfunctions can lead to costly and senseless energy waste.

The running record and charting of monthly utility bills will provide management with a month-to-month comparison that should show seasonal “ebbs and flows” in the consumption of various

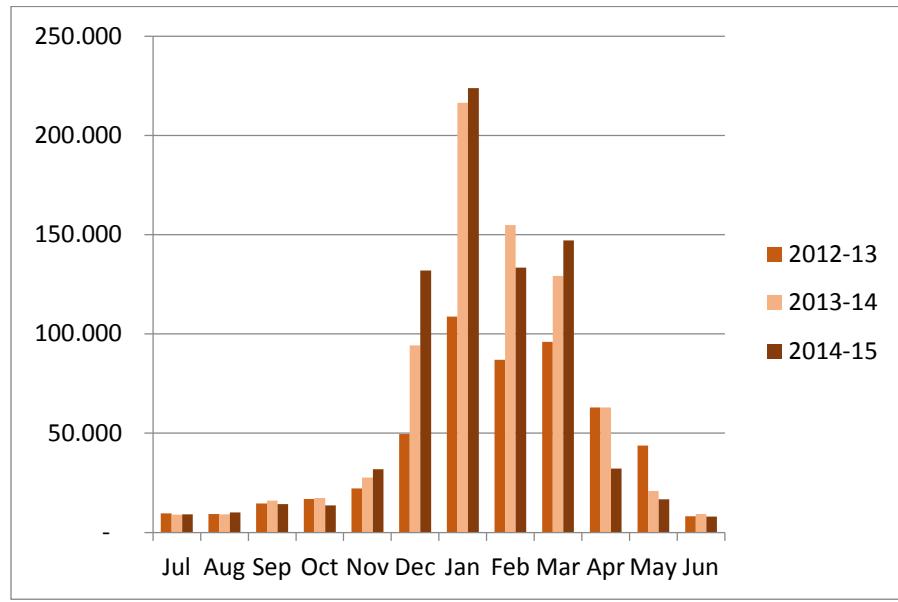
types of energy. The recording and charting should go back at least one year (preferably three to five years) so as to allow for “same-time-previous-year” comparisons (**Exhibit 4-11 and 4-12**).

Exhibit 4-11
Sample - Electrical Consumption by Month



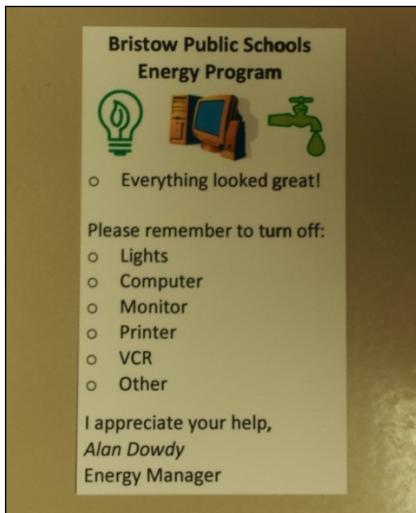
Source: OEQA Review Archive

Exhibit 4-12
Sample - Natural Gas Consumption by Month



Source: OEQA Review Archive

Taken one step further, as a best practice, this person could also leave energy conservation reminders or “Oops Slips” (**Exhibits 4-13 and 4-14**) whenever they discover that room lights, computer monitors or other electronic devices are left on by students or staff.

Exhibit 4-13**Energy Saving Remeinder Sticker from
Bristow Public Schools**

Source: Bristow Public Schools, April 2012

Exhibit 4-14**Generic Energy Saving
Reminder Sticker**

Source: www.awarenessideas.com, April 2016

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

D. SAFETY AND SECURITY

Today, more than ever, school districts are expected to provide a safe and secure environment for their students and staff. While districts are largely insulated from violent crime, it is the few incidents of violence at schools that draw national attention. School districts must take proactive measures in safety and security even in incident-free schools. Students, teachers, and other district employees deserve a safe school environment in which to work and learn.

In 2003, Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 (HSPD-5) initiated the development of a National Incident Management System (NIMS) and requires its use by public sector agencies, including school districts. The intent of this system is to provide a common template and language for responding organizations to work together in preventing, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from incidents. As noted by FEMA, NIMS represents “a core set of doctrine, concepts, principles, terminology, and organizational processes that enables effective, efficient, and collaborative incident management”.

NIMS emphasizes that true preparedness requires a commitment to continuous review and improvement. Most districts understand the continuous nature of emergency management, as well as the four phases that comprise the process circle (**Exhibit 4-15**).

Exhibit 4-15
Continuous Process of Emergency Management



Source: The Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools' Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities, January 2007

The Oklahoma Commission on School Safety, which was put together in response to the Newtown, Connecticut school shootings, submitted a number of recommendations to the Oklahoma Legislature. Based upon the commission's recommendations, the Legislature passed four new laws. Among other things, the laws require schools to update their safety plans every year and have frequent "intruder drills," with students taking cover while the doors are locked and the windows covered. The state also created a new Oklahoma School Security Institute to provide threat assessment to schools and assist them in keeping policies up to date.

Safety

FINDING 4-6

The fire suppression system in the administration building for ECS has a number of problems that should be corrected for the safety of building occupants and visitors.

During the walk-through of the administration building for ECS it was noted that the door to the room housing the riser for the sprinkler system cannot be easily accessed because it is blocked by a desk. In fact, there is a good possibility that the riser has not been inspected since it received an addition to the system back in early-2000. The inspection tagging of the sprinkler riser is "curious" in that the inspection year that is punched was hand-written onto a preprinted inspection tag (**Exhibits 4-16 & 4-17**). Assuming that the year of inspection was actually hand-written by the inspector of record, it would mean that the system's inspection is a full 15 years out of date.

Exhibit 4-16**Blocked Door to Room Housing Fire Sprinkler System Riser for ECS**

Source: OEQA, May 2016

Exhibit 4-17**“Curious” Inspection Tag for Fire Sprinkler System Riser for ECS**

Source: OEQA, May 2016

It was also noted during the walk-through, that a number of sprinkler heads were missing their escutcheons (the metal hardware surrounding the sprinkler head) and were in conflict with suspended ceiling tiles (**Exhibits 4-18 & 4-19**). Both of these conditions can lead to sprinkler head malfunction occurring at the most crucial of times.

Exhibit 4-18**Fire Sprinkler Head at ECS is Missing Its Escutcheon**

Source: OEQA, May 2016

Exhibit 4-19**Fire Sprinkler Head at ECS Missing Escutcheon and in Conflict with Ceiling Tile**

Source: OEQA, May 2016

RECOMMENDATION

Contact the landlord or property management company and request that an inspection is made of the ECS administration building's fire sprinkler system. Make sure the inspection

includes the riser for the system and be sure to secure a copy of the inspection report for ECS records.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

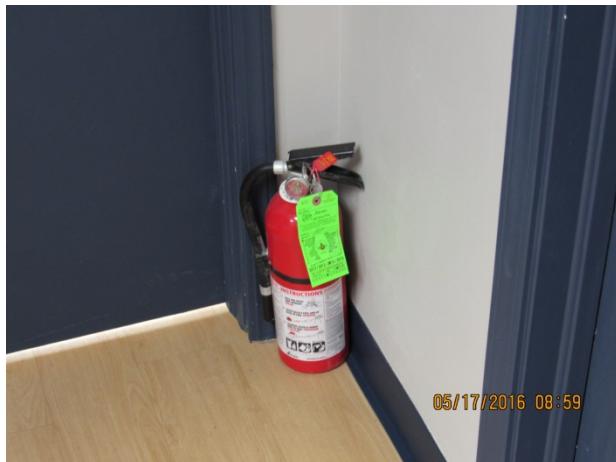
FINDING 4-7

The fire extinguishers in the administration building for ECS have a number of problems that should be corrected for the safety of building occupants and visitors.

During the walk-through of the administration building for ECS it was noted that none of the hand-held fire extinguishers were mounted properly (**Exhibit 4-20 and Exhibit 4-21**), none of the extinguishers had received their yearly “maintenance” inspection (**Exhibit 4-22 and Exhibit 4-23**) and none of the extinguishers had received their monthly “visual” inspection (**Exhibit 4-24 and Exhibit 4-25**).

Exhibit 4-20

Hand-Held Fire Extinguisher at ECS is not Properly Mounted on Wall



Source: OEQA, May 2016

Exhibit 4-21

Hand-Held Fire Extinguisher at ECS is not Properly Mounted on Wall



Source: OEQA, May 2016

Exhibit 4-22

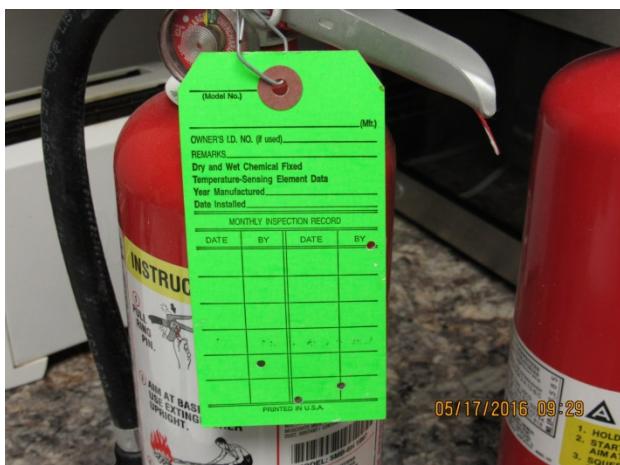
Hand-Held Fire Extinguisher at ECS has Not Received Its Yearly Inspection

**Exhibit 4-23**

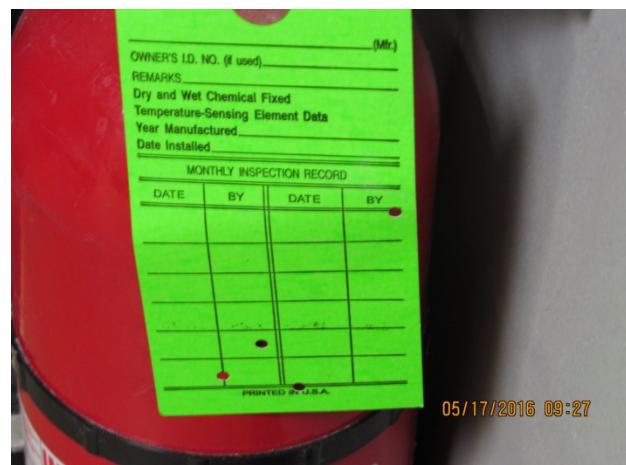
Hand-Held Fire Extinguisher at ECS has Not Received Its Yearly Inspection

**Exhibit 4-24**

Hand-Held Fire Extinguisher at ECS has Not Received Its Monthly Inspection

**Exhibit 4-25**

Hand-Held Fire Extinguisher at ECS has Not Received Its Monthly Inspection

**RECOMMENDATION**

Contact the landlord or property management company and request that an annual inspection is made of the ECS administration building's hand-held fire extinguishers. Also, request that the landlord assign a capable maintenance person to make monthly inspections of the hand-held fire extinguishers and initial the inspection ticket accordingly. Finally, be sure to secure a copy of the annual inspection report for the ECS records.

According to NFPA 10 - *Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers*, hand-held fire extinguishers weighing 40 pounds or less should be mounted on the wall with the top of the extinguisher no

higher than five feet above the floor. The distance between the bottom of the extinguisher and the floor should never be less than four inches.

NFPA 10 also addresses the various inspections required of hand-held fire extinguishers. A visual inspection is required upon installation and then again every month. The monthly visual inspection should include:

- Extinguishers are in their designated places;
- There are no obstructions to access or visibility;
- Safety seals are not broken or missing;
- There is no evidence of physical damage, corrosion, leakage or clogged nozzle;
- Pressure gauge readings are in the proper range or position;
- Operating instructions are legible and facing outward; and
- Fullness is confirmed by weighing or lifting. (the heft test)

The yearly maintenance inspection requires a more thorough examination and is also required when extinguishers undergo hydrostatic testing. Maintenance is required to include a thorough examination of the mechanical parts, extinguishing agent and expelling means of each portable fire extinguisher and, therefore, must be performed by an approved extinguisher servicing company.

Finally, NFPA 10 recommends that, as a best practice, a permanent record be kept for each extinguisher that includes at least the following information:

- Date maintenance was last performed and by whom;
- Date the extinguisher was recharged and by whom;
- Date the six-year maintenance was last performed and by whom; and
- Date the extinguisher was hydrostatically tested and by whom.

A sample portable fire extinguisher record is provided in **Exhibit 4-26** below.

Exhibit 4-26

Sample Portable Fire Extinguisher Record

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 4-8

The exit signs in one area of the administration building for ECS have a number of problems that should be corrected for the safety of building occupants and visitors.

During the walk-through of the administration building for ECS it was noted that exit signage in the southeast area of the office was no longer correct because what had been the main entrance to the facility had been repurposed. ECS must decide how the former main entrance will function and then adjust exit signage and door hardware accordingly.

The situation that currently exists is dangerous because it has building occupants being directed by exit signs to the southern-most east-west hallway. Once in that hallway, however, there is no exit sign directing occupants through an interior doorway into the former reception area (**Exhibit**



4-27). Also, once in the former reception area, there are exterior doors labeled “exit” but these doors are secured with a dead bolt lock and do not have the “panic hardware” that would be required of a properly equipped exit door (**Exhibit 4-28**). The most immediate concern is that the exterior door that is currently labeled as being an exit is secured with a dead bolt lock.

Exhibit 4-27

No Exit Sign in the Southern-Most East-West Hallway to Direct ECS Occupants



Source: OEQA, May 2016

Exhibit 4-28

Doors Labeled as Exit are dead bolt locked and do not have Proper “Panic Hardware”



Source: OEQA, May 2016

RECOMMENDATION

Contact the landlord or property management company and request that an inspection be made of the ECS administration building’s emergency egress plan that would include interior exit signage and exterior door hardware.

OSHA Code of Federal Regulations, NFPA 70 – National Electric Code, NFPA 101 – Life Safety Code and the International Fire Code could all have bearing in this matter. All four documents discuss exits and exit lighting in some capacity. An inspection of the ECS administration building would yield recommendations and/or requirements on what signage and door hardware must be provided for the facility to be safe for occupancy and properly equipped to facilitate expeditious egress in the event of an emergency.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 4-9

In the building labeled “Epic Charter Schools”, occupant safety could be strengthened by creating and posting evacuation diagrams for interior spaces.

The interior of ECS’s administration building is a maze of hallways and office doors that all look very similar. Even with exit signs installed in their proper locations it would be helpful to have

evacuation diagrams created and posted in interior spaces. As a best practice, this information should also be included in an employee handbook along with procedures for the other types of emergencies requiring building occupants to egress or take shelter.

RECOMMENDATION

ECS administration should ensure that emergency evacuation diagrams include all of the basic elements and are posted in offices and in the employee handbook.

Emergency evacuation diagrams may be computer generated or drawn by hand, but regardless of how they are created; certain basic elements must be included in each diagram. The basic elements of an emergency evacuation diagram include the following:

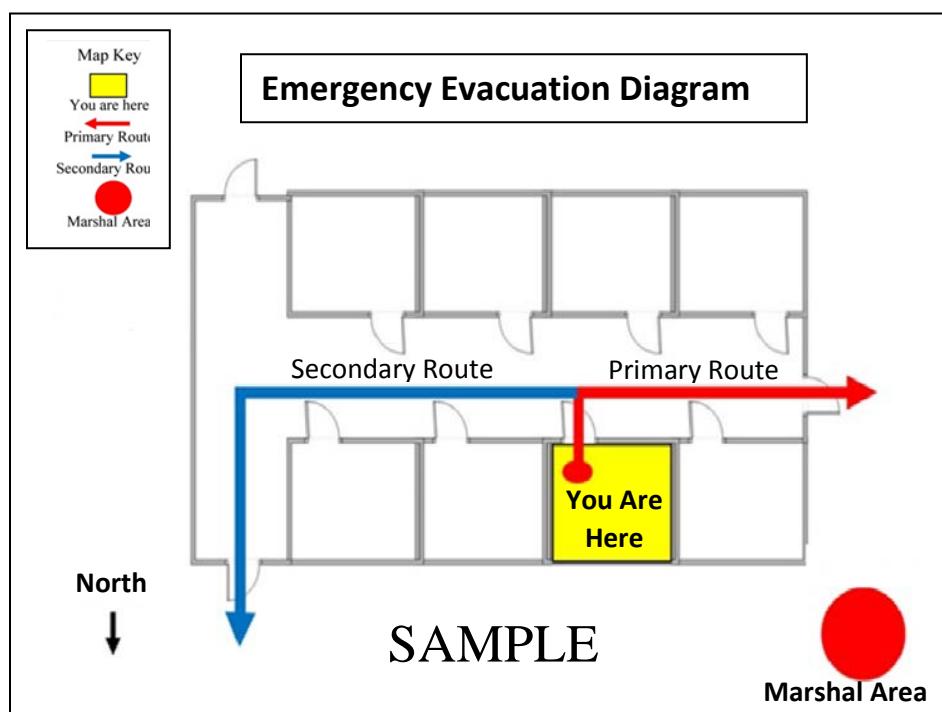
- Show the basic layout of the building interior or area within the building, including walls, hallways, and doors. The outside of the property should be shown as well, indicating a marshal or assembly area so that an accounting of students and staff can be accomplished.
- The starting point. This is the location on the diagram where the person reading the diagram is currently standing. Make a large red dot and label it “You Are Here” or distinguish the room by a color that is included in the diagram key.
- The primary evacuation route. The primary evacuation route should be the shortest distance between “You Are Here” and a place where a person can exit the building. The primary route is indicated by a thick red line that extends from the “You Are Here” to the exit. Draw the primary evacuation route as a red line with an arrowhead ending on the exit and label it “Primary Evacuation Route” in the diagram key.
- The secondary evacuation route. The secondary evacuation route is taken when the primary route is unusable. The secondary route should be the shortest distance between “You Are Here” and a secondary place where a person can exit the building. The secondary route is indicated by a thick blue line that extends from the “You Are Here” or from an intersecting point with the primary route to the secondary exit. Draw the secondary evacuation route as a blue line with an arrowhead ending on the exit and label it “Secondary Evacuation Route” in the diagram key.
- Show the basic compass orientation of the diagram in one corner of the page, indicating the direction of North with the letter “N” and an arrow pointing in that direction. Regarding diagram display, there are two schools of thought, direction of immediate travel vs. north always being up. Most people will more quickly orient themselves if the evacuation diagram is displayed in such a manner that it coincides with an occupant’s physical direction of travel from “You Are Here.” For example, if the primary exit route is through the classroom door and turning left to go down the hallway then the diagram should be oriented so that the viewer sees the primary exit route arrow as going out the classroom door and turning left to go down the hallway. While north being always up is technically correct, precious time can

be lost while people either exit in the wrong direction or stop in a doorway and attempt to orient their location and direction of travel to the diagram.

- The marshal area. This is the place where evacuees should meet. It should be a safe distance away from the building to provide adequate protection from fire and any onsite hazards such as chemicals or explosive materials. Draw the marshal area on your diagram using a red circle and label it “Marshal Area” or include it in the map key.

A sample of a basic emergency evacuation diagram is included below (**Exhibit 4-29**).

Exhibit 4-29
Sample - Emergency Evacuation Diagram



Source: OEQA - North Rock Creek School Performance Review

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 4-10

All of the emergency egress lights in the administration building for ECS properly indicated the presence of battery back-up (**Exhibit 4-30**) and illuminated when tested (**Exhibit 4-31**). Providing emergency egress lighting that functions properly helps to ensure the safety of building occupants and visitors.

Exhibit 4-30

Emergency Egress Light at ECS Indicating Battery Back-up is Available



Source: OEQA, May 2016

Exhibit 4-31

Emergency Egress Light at ECS Illuminating when Test Button is Depressed



Source: OEQA, May 2016

COMMENDATION

All of the emergency egress lights in the administration building for Epic Charter Schools properly switched to battery back-up and illuminated when they were tested.

FINDING 4-11

ECS has deployed a system of cameras, speakers and electro-magnetic locks with a chipped key fob system to provide audio and visual point-of-entry security for the administration building and all other school facilities (**Exhibit 4-32 through 4-34**).

Exhibit 4-32

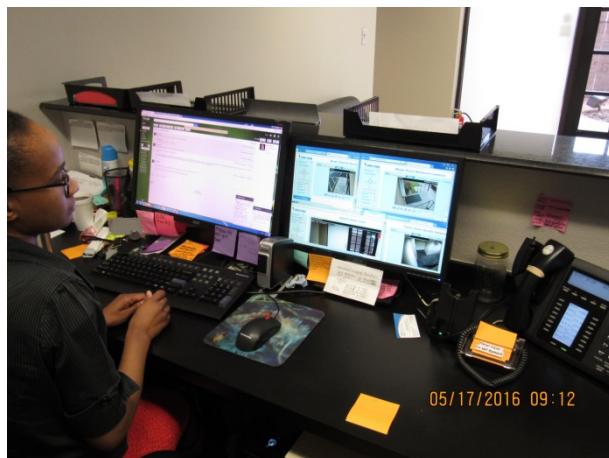
Fixed Dome Camera for Security System at ECS Administration Building



Source: OEQA, May 2016

Exhibit 4-33

Monitored Security Camera Feed at ECS Administration Building



Source: OEQA, May 2016

Exhibit 4-34
Security System with Chipped Key Fob is in use at
All Epic Facilities in Oklahoma City and Tulsa



Source: OEQA, October 2016

COMMENDATION

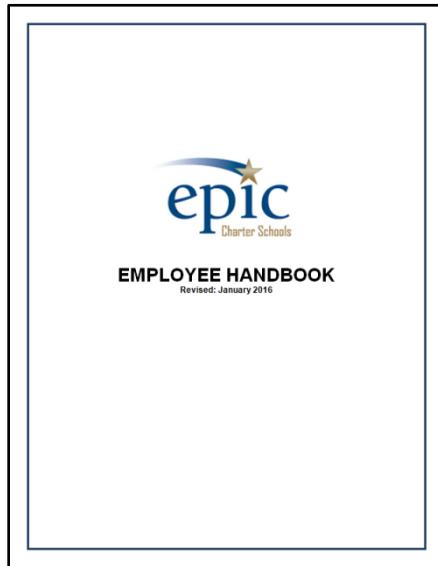
Security at the entrances to all of Epic Charter Schools' facilities is commendable with a camera, speaker and electro-magnetic lock activated by a chipped key fob being in use to prevent unwanted access to building occupants and contents.

FINDING 4-12

The ECS employee handbook stresses that teachers should never meet alone with students on a face-to-face basis.

Under **Meeting with Students** on page 21 of the ECS Employee Handbook (**Exhibit 4-35**) it clearly states that “All contact should be documented. For your protection, never meet with a student face-to-face in his or her home alone. Either schedule the face-to-face meeting in a public place or at a time when the parent/guardian is home with the child.” This should be considered a best practice.

Exhibit 4-35
ECS Employee Handbook – Revised January 2016



Source: OEQA, May 2016

COMMENDATION

Epic Charter Schools is commended for clearly stating in their employee handbook that all student-teacher contact should be documented and that teachers should never meet with a student face-to-face alone.

FINDING 4-13

There are several safety concerns with regard to entries and omissions in the *Epic Charter Schools – Employee Handbook*.

In the ECS employee handbook the review team noted the following concerns:

- Page 17, under **Workplace Bullying**, the handbook makes mention of ECS having a “Code of Ethics” yet the Code could not be located anywhere in the document;
- Page 18, under **Violence in the Workplace**, the handbook indicates that ECS has a “Threat Management Team” yet team members were not specified by position or name anywhere in the document;
- Page 18, under **Violence in the Workplace**, reads, “The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as possible” but the intent and this statement should be strengthened by removing the phrase “as much as possible.”

- Page 18, under **Safety**, reads, “each employee has the responsibility to identify and familiarize her/himself with the emergency plan for his/her working area” yet no emergency plans were ever located by or provided to the review team; and
- Page 19, under **Safety**, the handbook reads, “Human Resources has the responsibility to develop and the authority to implement the safety and health program...” but the review team has been provided with no evidence that a safety and health program was ever developed or implemented.

RECOMMENDATION

Form a working group comprised of administrators and teachers with the purpose of reviewing and then rewriting *Epic Charter Schools – Employee Handbook*.

Employee handbooks should be reviewed annually to ensure that all sections are current and reflect the latest in state and federal law, board of education policy and district procedure. A well designed handbook should address those questions most frequently asked by employees, though it need not be in a FAQ format. Most material included in the handbook will be universal to all employees, but if the district has sites which provide specialized services then handbooks for those sites may require addenda that make them site specific.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 4-14

The *Epic Charter Schools – Student / Parent Handbook* should be reorganized and rewritten.

- The document needs a table of contents at the beginning for ease of use.
- The document still includes references to “Graham Public Schools” and “school property”.
- Under **Notice to Parents Regarding Release of Directory Information**, the paragraph following the twelve-item list is very confusing and should be rewritten.
- In consideration of the school’s frequent use of leased and public facilities for testing and face-to-face meetings with students, it would be considered a best practice to review emergency procedures with students at each of these locations.
- Generally, the document’s subheadings should be reordered under different headings:
 - It is unclear why the subheadings of Face-to-Face Instruction, Communication, Curriculum Choices, Testing Progress, Internet Access and Parent Volunteerism are included under the heading Academic Calendar.

- It is unclear why the subheadings of Academic Dishonesty Policy and Policy on Academic Dishonesty are both needed.
- A heading of Student Behavior should be created, and it should include the material currently provided under the subheadings of Academic Dishonesty Policy, Policy on Academic Dishonesty, Student Conduct and Discipline, Truancy, Unacceptable Student Behavior, Cheating and/or Plagiarism, Abuse and/or Misuse of Computers, and Forgery.
- The subheading of Health and Safety should be upgraded to a heading. The current heading of Behavioral Health Services should be downgraded to a subheading and moved under the newly created heading of Health and Safety.

RECOMMENDATION

Form a working group comprised of administrators and teachers with the purpose of reviewing and then rewriting *Epic Charter Schools – Student / Parent Handbook*.

Student/Parent Handbooks should be reviewed annually to ensure that all sections are current and reflect the latest in state and federal law, board of education policy and district procedure. A well designed handbook should address those questions most frequently asked by students and parents, though it need not be in a FAQ format. Most material included in the handbook will be universal to all students and parents but if students are attending a site which provides specialized services then their handbooks may require addenda that make them site specific.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 5:

TECHNOLOGY

Chapter 5

Support Services - Technology

This chapter reviews several areas of technology-related support services in Epic Charter Schools (ECS). It is divided into these sections:

- A. Introduction & Background
- B. Policies, Procedures & Planning
- C. Infrastructure, Software, Hardware & Operations
- D. Technology Acquisition Practices

A. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Foundation for Excellence in Education Digital Learning Council introduced the *10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning*¹ in the fall of 2010. These elements identify actions to be taken by lawmakers and policymakers to promote a high-quality education for all students. **Exhibit 5-1** lists the ten elements with a short explanation of expectations for each element. This chapter will explore the components of the elements for personalized learning, quality choices and delivery.

Exhibit 5-1 10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning

10 Elements	Description
Student Eligibility	All students are digital learners and must be provided opportunities to access online courses throughout their entire K-12 experience.
Student Access	All students have access to high-quality digital content and online courses.
Personalized Learning	All students can customize their education using digital content through an approved provider.
Advancement	Students progress based on demonstrated competency.
Quality Content	Digital content, instructional materials and online and blended learning courses are high quality.
Quality Instruction	Digital instruction is high quality. Professional development in digital learning is available to teachers teaching an online or blended learning course.
Quality Choices	All students have access to multiple high-quality digital providers
Assessment & Accountability	Student learning is the metric for evaluating the quality of content and instruction.
Funding	Funding creates incentives for performance, options and innovation.
Delivery	Infrastructure supports digital learning.

Source: Digital Learning Now

¹ <http://www.digitallearningnow.com/10Elements/>



Technology Specifications for Assessments

The current trend of online assessments has been a common concern for many Oklahoma school districts. Transitioning to the required specifications needed has been a challenge for all districts, but even more so for rural school districts. The State of Oklahoma changed testing vendors, and is now using Measured Progress for the Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP). Technology still remains a major component of the assessment process.

In 2014-15 the State Department of Education (SDE) released to schools their technology guidelines² for the Measured Progress assessments so they will be properly equipped and ready to administer the tests. **Exhibit 5-2** illustrates the most current assessment technology specifications that districts in Oklahoma must consider as they administer online assessments.

Please note:

Minimum Specifications – These specifications represent the oldest operating systems and lowest levels of hardware capacity acceptable for administering OCCT. Computers with these minimum specifications have to be verified thoroughly by using the workstation readiness test to identify any performance related problems.

Recommended Specifications – These specifications provide the levels of computer and network capacity that are more likely to provide a smooth testing experience for students.

² http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/2014-15_MP_OCCT_Technology_Guidelines_0.pdf



Exhibit 5-2
Oklahoma Spring OCCT Assessment Technology Specifications

Component	Minimum	Recommended
Connectivity	Must be able to connect to the Internet via wired or wireless networks	
CPU	1.2 Ghz	1.2 Ghz
Memory	512 MB	1 GB
Screen Size	9.7-inch screen size or larger/“10-inch class” tablets or larger	
Screen Resolution	1024 x 768	1024 x 768
Windows Desktops/Laptops	Windows XP – Service Pack 3 32-bit	Windows 7-8.1 32-bit, 64-bit
Mac Desktops/Laptops	10.5.6	10.7 – 10.9
Linux Desktops/Laptops	Ubuntu 10.4, Fedora 14 32-bit, 64-bit	Ubuntu 11.10, Fedora 16 32-bit, 64-bit
Android Tablets	Android 4.0 (with 512 MB RAM or greater)	Android 4.0-4.4 (with 1 GB RAM or greater)
Apple iOS	iPad 2 running iOS 6 (with 512 MB RAM or greater)	iPad 2 running iOS 6-7 (with 512 MB RAM or greater)
Windows Touch-enabled Desktops and Laptops		Not supported for security reasons
Chrome OS for Chromebooks	31	31-34
Browsers		Chrome 46 or newer Firefox 42 or newer Safari 8 or newer Internet Explorer 10–11 Microsoft Edge
Input Device Requirements for All Desktops/Laptops		Keyboard – wired or wireless/Bluetooth Mouse or Touchpad
Headphone/Earphone/ Ear Buds		Headphones/Earpieces/Ear Buds are only required for students who have a text-to-speech accommodations

Source: OCCT Guidelines³

B. POLICIES, PROCEDURES & PLANNING

FINDING 5-1

ECS has a mixture of laptops, iPads and Chromebooks that have been issued to the students for completing their studies. A student’s assigned computer/device is dependent upon the student’s selected curriculum path and the technology required for that path.

ECS contracts with Beasley Technology Inc. for all technology support. With ECS issuing three different types of hardware platforms, this has caused extra management requirements for Beasley in their support role. Beasley reported that it is more difficult to manage iPads and laptops than it is Chromebooks. Chromebook software provides Internet filtering and helps prevent student access to inappropriate material.

³ http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/2014-15_MP_OCCT_Technology_Guidelines_0.pdf



RECOMMENDATION

ECS work groups should produce a timeline for the universal use of Chromebooks and the phase-out of iPads and laptops in the next two to four years.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

C. INFRASTRUCTURE, SOFTWARE, HARDWARE AND OPERATIONS

FINDING 5-2

Beasley Technology Inc. handles the disaster recovery and backup of all ECS servers and staff computers to ensure that no data is lost due to man-made or natural disasters. It is a cloud-based service that is regularly checked to ensure that it is working.

Some school districts lack backup policies, procedures and infrastructure to ensure that if disaster strikes, there is a way to bring operations back on-line and restore the district to a functioning status. Many districts also do not test their backup solution to ensure that it is truly functional.

COMMENDATION

ECS is commended for contracting with a qualified company to provide a level of service and support that ensures that the school's primary concern of educating students will not be interrupted in the event of a disaster.

FINDING 5-3

Staff, teachers, student and network hardware support is currently provided by Beasley Technology Inc. Beasley has 12 full-time employees assigned to work with all ECS hardware.

Many Oklahoma schools use contracted third party service providers to provide hardware and network support; however, a common complaint, especially among rural school districts, is that it requires too much time to get technology repaired or that the contracted service provider staff would change frequently, thereby losing system familiarity. Most schools do not have a dedicated staff just for their technology needs.

Beasley offers several ways to help support ECS. They use Autotask Endpoint Management tools or Webroot antivirus, both of which allow Beasley technicians to remotely take over a computer to fix software related problems. They will also ship new hardware to students if there is a hardware problem.

COMMENDATION

ECS has contracted with a reputable company that has a low staff turnover rate. This has allowed Beasley to provide excellent customer service and to respond to the school's changing needs in a timely fashion.

FINDING 5-4

ECS currently has standardized their processes by using Google Document, Google Email and Google Hangout to simplify the training of students, parents and staff.

To keep cost low and training simplified, Google's family of software is a good choice because of its widespread use in homes or for personal accounts. Some schools have tried to have in-house software solutions such as Microsoft exchange servers, but these have proven to be hard to maintain and support and often require extra hardware to be supported. There are always learning curves required of staff when in-house solutions are attempted.

COMMENDATION

Standardizing on one platform of software has kept costs down and made installing software very simple because all Google products are web-based.

FINDING 5-5

Currently, the Communications Director handles the school website, social media and email for teachers, students and parents. He is able to manage all of these using WordPress⁴ for their website, MailPoet⁵ for mass emails and agorapulse⁶ for their social media

Exhibit 5-3 presents the staff survey responses regarding ECS's communication through email and other social media. Ninety-nine percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they and/or the administrators communicate using email and other social media. Providing school personnel, students and all staff with this mode of communication is crucial in a virtual school environment.

Exhibit 5-3
Staff Survey Responses Related to Communication

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our virtual charter school staff and administrators often use email or other social media to communicate with one another.	84%	15%	1%	1%	0%

Source: OEQA – Epic Survey Responses (2016)

⁴ https://wordpress.com/create/?utm_source=bing&utm_campaign=WordPress-Generic-Exact-US-GP

⁵ <https://www.mailpoet.com/>

⁶ <https://www.agorapulse.com/>



Most school districts are not able to communicate with students, staff, teacher and parents in so many different ways. Most districts are limited to email and a website for communications with shareholders. Many school's web sites are outdated and lack staff or funding to provide good communications to visitors.

COMMENDATION

ECS is commended for providing an efficient and effective communication system that can be managed by a single staff person.

FINDING 5-6

All student information is stored in an off-site third-party database called Epicenter. Epicenter is used by the Student Support Manager, System Support Manager, Assets Manager, Director of Technology, Beasley, students, teachers and parents.

Most school districts utilize several software packages running in order to organize all of the information about their students. Some information may even still be in paper form and is not readily accessible by teachers or administration. This third-party database software forms a complete security protected student record that includes state standards, student test results and student curriculum that is accessible from a single point via any Internet connected computer. This allows administrators, teachers and support staff to have a clear picture of each student and their progress.

COMMENDATION

ECS's use of a large third-party student records management service provider that holds all information needed for all shareholders is strategic and forward thinking.

FINDING 5-7

Some ECS teachers have requested on-line troubleshooting guides for the most common hardware problems that they encounter in the field. This was mentioned both in the survey and during face-to-face interviews with teachers. **Exhibit 5-4** defines the problem more clearly with a sample statement from the staff survey responses.

Exhibit 5-4 Sample Survey Comment Regarding Troubleshooting

Survey Question (open-ended)	Sample Response
What is one suggestion you would like to offer to improve your Virtual Charter District?	A technology boot camp from Beasley would be great! We spend tons of time on technology problems that could be an easy fix if we knew a few more things to do with our families to fix computer problems.

Source: OEQA – Epic Survey Responses (2016)

RECOMMENDATION

Review all support calls and create a troubleshooting guide that is simple enough for teachers or students to use before contacting Beasley for support.

Beasley records all requests for technology support that have occurred over time, not only from staff, but also from students. A review of those records to identify common problems that required easy troubleshooting solutions could be placed into a self-help guide that would be beneficial for all users.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5-8

Currently, some students have experienced problems with the Internet speeds when using ECS provided wireless hot spots in remote areas of both the western and eastern parts of the state away from the large populated areas.

If students are unable to complete work assignments or access the Internet it will have an impact on their learning. These problems would need to be addressed by Beasley with testing of the wireless cards and ECS provided hot spots. Two service providers are NEOKNET⁷ in eastern Oklahoma and Rise Broadband⁸ in western Oklahoma. These companies would need to be vetted to ensure that they can provide excellent service in the areas needed. **Exhibit 5-5** provides sample comments made by students and parents regarding the problem of poor Internet access and speed.

⁷ <http://neoknet.com/>

⁸ <http://risebroadband.com/>



Exhibit 5-5
Student and Parent Comments Regarding Internet Access and Speed

Student Survey Question (open-ended)	Sample Responses
What suggestions would you like to offer to improve our school?	Better Internet wifi. Problems with Internet connection and slow wifi causing lag in videos and computer work.
Parent Survey Question (open-ended)	Sample Responses
What do you like least about your child's virtual charter school?	It depends on the Internet connection which can be spotty in the area we live The Internet is slow sometimes T-mobile Internet Internet when it switched to T-Mobile. There are days where my kids can't even log in to do work because the service area is so poor even with the personal cell spot that t-mobile sent out T-mobile Internet service
What suggestions would you like to offer to improve our virtual charter school?	Verizon Internet Go back to Verizon for Internet Update your wifi with one's that actually work. We have a metal roof and can't get any service inside our home. When the computer or wifi box goes down the time should be expedited so that our children don't lose any learning time.

Source: OEQA – Epic Survey Comments (2016)

RECOMMENDATION

Beasley should collect information from students living in rural areas of western and eastern Oklahoma to determine the best service provider and means of connection for the students.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5-9

Copiers store a digital copy of all scanned documents on an internal hard drive, but ECS currently has no policy in place that requires that a copier's hard disk be wiped clean before the unit is returned after being leased or used as a traded-in for a new model.

With student grades, IEP notes or other personal information potentially stored on the hard drive could be copied if not erased before the copier is returned to the store. It has been reported in news stories of records being found on copiers that should not have been available.

RECOMMENDATION

ECS should establish a written policy that requires all copier hard drives be removed and destroyed or wiped clean before leaving the building.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5-10

Currently the Student Support Managers are hand loading all curriculum into each student's record in the Epicenter student record database. There are also outside third party curriculum web sites that are available for students to use and they too are being hand loaded by the Student Support Managers.

Entering data by hand is open to data entry errors. It is also a very time consuming and mind-numbing task. There are currently only two staff members inputting information for all students.

RECOMMENDATION

ECS should hire an Application Program Interface (API) expert to write “Software BOTS” for automatic loading of student curriculum into the Epicenter database plus the uploading of data into outside student learning modules.

An Internet Bot is produced by an API Technical Writer.

Definition – Of an Internet Bot: An Internet bot, in its most generic sense, is software that performs an automated task over the Internet. More specifically, a bot is an automated application used to perform simple and repetitive tasks that would be time-consuming, mundane or impossible for a human to perform. Bots can be used for productive tasks, but they are also frequently used for malicious purposes. The term "bot" comes from robot. An Internet bot may also be known as a Web robot or WWW robot.⁹

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost to hire outside sources will vary upon the specification of the bot that is needed. The cost is usually around \$31.00 an hour with an estimated 10 to 15 hours being needed to produce the required API to automate the process of loading each student into all the required classes for each semester. It might take some maintenance of the API so the cost for yearly maintenance has also been included. Total cost over five years is estimated to be \$3,525.

Recommendation	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Hire consultant for 15 hours @ \$31.00 per hour to develop five APIs.	(\$2,325)	(\$300)	(\$300)	(\$300)	(\$300)

⁹ <https://www.techopedia.com/definition/24063/Internet-bot>



FINDING 5-11

ECS's main building on NW 122nd Street in Oklahoma City has a 100 MB cable Internet connection. Google Hangouts and other video intensive programs that require a higher level of Internet speed are not performing at peak performance.

While interviewing an ECS staff member for this review the review team member witnessed the Internet dropping connections and the staff member would either be off-line or would lose sound. With the number of staff regularly online and the regular use of Google Hangouts for staff meetings, the current Internet connection does not provide good communication between members of the "Hangouts". AT&T provided this information about their gigabyte technology.¹⁰

RECOMMENDATION

Internet speeds and network speeds should be increased at the main location to improve Google Hangouts interactions and allow more teachers access to the ECS site.

FISCAL IMPACT

With E-Rate funding and school discounts, the reviewer was not able to determine an actual cost for the school district to upgrade the existing Internet service. Beasley is the service provider for the Internet connection and should be able to provide a cost to increase the speed of the Internet. The in-house switches should be such that all computers used for Google Hangouts will have high speed connections. The estimated total cost for new switches is \$3,042.

Recommendation	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Purchase New High-Speed Internet Switches	(\$3,042)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

D. TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION PRACTICES

FINDING 5-12

Most student laptops and staff computers are 3 to 5 years old and will have another 2 to 4 years of life due to the quality maintenance that Beasley provides. The practice has been established that once a student/teacher laptop's processors begin to slow then the unit is turned into a student testing laptop, which then adds an additional 2 or 3 years of useful life.

Most school districts discard old laptops at the end of their instructional or classroom life. It is too costly and/or time consuming to use outdated technology. However, by providing quality maintenance and employing a bit of repurposing, ECS has been able to continue to use older computers successfully.

¹⁰ http://about.att.com/content/dam/snrdocs/GigaPower/business_fiber_launch_oklahoma.pdf

COMMENDATION

ECS is able to extend the useful life of laptops and hardware by providing quality maintenance and by finding alternate uses after the unit is too old for student/teacher use.

FINDING 5-13

ECS is not currently using a third party E-Rate specialist to ensure that the school is receiving all the E-Rate funds it may be eligible to receive.

Most schools that employ E-Rate specialists have an increase in E-Rate funding to the school because the specialists ensure that all forms are completed properly, all options for funding are pursued and bring a creative expertise to the process.

RECOMMENDATION

ECS should contract with a third party consultant that specializes in completing E-Rate applications for schools to ensure that the school receives the highest level of funding.

FISCAL IMPACT

The consulting team estimates that an outside vendor can be contracted for approximately \$2,000 per year with cost adjustment increase of 10% per year for a total projected cost \$12,210.00 for five years of service.

Recommendation	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Hire an E-rate consultant.	(\$2,000)	(\$2,200)	(\$2,420)	(\$2,662)	(\$2,928)

FINDING 5-14

Currently there is no long-range planning document that shows the number of new laptops, Chromebooks and IPADS that might be required to accommodate the projected student growth in the 2016-2017 school year and beyond.

It was suggested that ECS could expect an increase of 4,000 to 6,000 students in the next couple of years. With this large of a student increase, vis-à-vis demand for student computers, multi-year planning accompanied by written needs statements, technical specifications and financial estimates are essential. Waiting until the last minute to determine what is needed and then make purchases leads to product unavailability, higher costs and delays bringing new units online.

RECOMMENDATION

Form a work group to develop and complete a technology acquisition planning template that could be used to project each year's need for new laptops, Chromebooks, wireless access points, etc.



FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Appendix A:
Staff Survey Results

Staff Survey

Surveys Completed: 128

Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Statistical Data

1. How long have you been employed by this Charter district?					
1 year or less	33%				
2-3 years	48%				
4 – 5 years	19%				
6 years or more	0.8%				
2. What is your role in the district?					
District Administrator	10%				
Principal	5%				
Teacher	53%				
Special Ed Teacher	25%				
Other Certified (e.g., Guidance Counselor)	2%				
Instructional Aide	0				
Central Office	5%				
3. Do you teach/lead as a faculty person who is:					
Full-time at this Virtual Charter?	86%				
Adjunct/part-time at this Virtual Charter?	3%				
Adjunct/part-time at this Virtual Charter and another educational institution?	4%				
Adjunct at this institution but employed full-time at another institution?	7%				
4. Which (if not all) e-learning formats do you use and to what degree do you use them?					
Format	Not at all	Very little	Some	Very much	Total Respondents
Face-to-Face	3%	5%	35%	57%	102
Synchronous (specific time each school day)	18%	35%	33%	14%	97
Asynchronous (anytime/any day)	8%	13%	36%	44%	101

Survey Questions

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	Our district's mission statement is clearly focused on student success.	70%	27%	3%	1%	0%
6	Our district's mission statement is formally reviewed and revised with involvement from stakeholders.	33%	37%	27%	3%	1%
7	Our district has a continuous improvement process based on data, goals, actions, and measures for growth.	74%	24%	3%	0%	0%
8	Our district administrators and district board complies with all policies, procedures, laws, and regulations.	63%	27%	8%	2%	0%
9	I understand the district's organizational structure.	51%	38%	7%	3%	0%
10	I know to whom I report for all my job functions.	68%	27%	3%	1%	0%
11	I understand the district's salary schedule and justification for paying performance stipends.	49%	39%	9%	3%	1%
12	I receive adequate training overall to perform my job functions.	38%	41%	13%	6%	2%
13	Our district's administrators expect staff members to hold all students to high academic standards.	62%	36%	2%	1%	0%
14	Our district's leaders hold themselves accountable for student learning.	49%	40%	10%	1%	0%

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15	Our district's leaders hold all staff members accountable for student learning.	54%	41%	4%	1%	0%
16	I received adequate training on the teacher/leader evaluation instrument our district has adopted.	37%	40%	16%	6%	1%
17	Our district principals regularly evaluate staff members on the adopted evaluation criteria designed to improve teaching and learning.	55%	30%	12%	3%	0%
18	The district gives student needs a high priority when making decisions.	52%	38%	7%	3%	0%
19	The central office is accessible and effectively communicates with district staff.	34%	44%	16%	6%	1%
20	My Principal is accessible and effectively communicates with staff.	67%	20%	10%	4%	0%
21	My Principal is an effective instructional leader	63%	22%	12%	4%	0%
22	Teachers know what is to be taught and when because they have access to a district adopted Pacing Calendar that reflects the current Oklahoma Academic Standards	42%	31%	19%	9%	0%
23	Teachers have scope and sequence documents that determine what is taught at each grade level.	44%	38%	15%	3%	0%
24	Teachers understand the Oklahoma Academic Standards/ objectives, test blueprints, and Item Specifications that are provided by the state department of education.	53%	40%	5%	2%	0%

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25	Teachers monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessments based on data from student assessments.	62%	32%	6%	0%	0%
26	Teachers develop and implement instructional strategies and interventions to address individual learning needs of students.	62%	32%	6%	0%	0%
27	Teachers consistently use instructional strategies that require self-reflection and development of critical thinking skills.	43%	47%	9%	1%	0%
28	Teachers use a process to clearly inform students of their learning expectations and standards of performance.	47%	47%	4%	2%	0%
29	Teachers provide students with specific and timely feedback about their learning.	43%	53%	3%	1%	0%
30	Teachers use multiple types of assessments to modify instruction and to revise the curriculum.	49%	45%	4%	2%	0%
31	Teachers participate in professional learning communities that meet online or in person	60%	34%	6%	0%	0%
32	Teachers in our district have been trained in the professional learning communities (PLC) process that promotes discussion about student learning	63%	25%	8%	4%	0%
33	In our district, new staff members receive mentoring/peer coaching to acclimate to the online environment.	40%	41%	12%	5%	2%

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
34	In our district, all staff members participate in continuous professional learning based on identified needs of the district.	47%	44%	9%	0%	0%
35	In our district, a professional development program is designed to build capacity among all professional staff members.	47%	44%	8%	1%	1%
36	In our district, all stakeholders are informed of policies, processes, and procedures related to grading and reporting.	38%	44%	15%	3%	0%
37	Our district provides highly qualified staff members to support student learning.	53%	43%	4%	0%	0%
38	In our district, related learning support services (Special Ed, ELL, etc.) are provided for all students based on their needs.	44%	41%	13%	1%	1%
39	Virtual charter school stakeholders are invited to provide input into the budgetary process.	15%	24%	51%	9%	2%
40	The virtual charter school actively applies for competitive state /federal grants and other grant opportunities.	17%	17%	64%	2%	0%
41	Our virtual charter school provides high quality student support services (e.g., counseling, referrals, educational and career planning).	26%	37%	32%	5%	0%
42	Our virtual charter school has a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and using student data.	67%	30%	3%	0%	0%

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
43	Our virtual charter school ensures that staff members are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	45%	44%	7%	3%	1%
44	Our virtual charter school uses data to monitor student readiness and success for the next level.	62%	35%	3%	0%	0%
45	Our district leaders monitor data related to district continuous improvement goals.	65%	32%	3%	0%	0%
46	Teachers adequately prepare students for state mandated assessments (OCCT, EOI).	54%	43%	3%	0%	0%
47	Students are adequately being prepared for college, if they choose that path.	44%	44%	10%	2%	0%
48	Students receive timely information on college entrance requirements and scholarship offers.	24%	41%	26%	9%	1%
49	Students receive adequate vocational training to prepare them for the workforce, if they choose that path.	23%	37%	30%	9%	1%
50	The virtual charter school has adequate technical/technological support for staff.	41%	50%	6%	2%	1%
51	I understand how to use technology as it relates to my job functions.	65%	34%	1%	0%	0%
52	The virtual charter school website is a useful tool for staff, parents, and students.	69%	27%	3%	0%	0%
53	Our virtual charter school staff and administrators often use email or other social media to communicate with one another.	84%	15%	1%	1%	0%
54	The virtual charter school has adequate technology to support its operations.	67%	27%	5%	0%	1%

WRITTEN RESPONSES

What do you like best about your Virtual Charter District?

Responses

- 1 The flexibility of teaching.
- 2 All the tools and resources that are available for teachers: Homework help and variety of supplementals
- 3 I like the flexibility offered with our charter school.
- 4 Access to a tremendous amount of virtual resources for students.
- 5 Learning can be differentiated for each student.
- 6 The focus on individual student learning and using all available means to meet each student's needs.
- 7 It's flexibility.
- 8 I believe in the work we are doing and I am proud to be a part of this organization.
- 9 The relationships between the teachers, family and students.
- 10 Flexibility
- 11 The flexibility for the student to learn and the various curriculums they get to choose from.
- 12 The flexibility it offers students and families.
- 13 I like the frequent feedback from our school leaders letting us know how our students, as a whole, are doing with regard to the constant data crunching they do.
- 14 I like the climate of the school and staff. Most are friendly and happy to help in any/all situations needed.
- 15 There are so many children struggling for different reasons in brick & mortar, our school gives the parents the choice. I love what Epic stands for.
- 16 Flexibility
- 17 Good school
- 18 The opportunity it gives students to meet their special scheduling needs.
- 19 Customized instructional plans for each student
- 20 Real-time intervention, Individual learning plans for each and every student, student success is not just rhetoric at our school, it is the Focus.
- 21 I love the flexibility that it gives to our students to learn.
- 22 That families have the option and choice in their learning and what works best for their student.
- 23 I like that students get the one on one help they need. This type of instruction is not possible for students in a brick and mortar school. I also like the flexible schedule and bonus pay for teachers.
- 24 The staff. Each one cares about their job and strives to make our Charter School better each year.
- 25 I like that it is centered around what is best for each individual student. I also like that the teacher's are treated with respect and great effort is made to support them while maintaining some autonomy.
- 26 I enjoy the constant encouragement to staff and the student minded approach.
- 27 I love the flexibility Epic offers its families and teachers. I appreciate the fact that as educators we are encouraged to meet the needs of all of our students. Thinking outside of the box is a regular occurrence. I also appreciate the fact that if I have a concern or an idea that I can approach senior administration and know that they will listen to my ideas and thoughtfully consider them and how or if those ideas may be applied to our school.
- 28 I like that the students are able to work any time of the day that best fits their needs.
- 29 I can meet one on one with my students or small group and I am not teaching to 30 students at a time.
- 30 How we customize education for each individual student.
- 31 We accept ALL students and meet their individual needs with customized learning options using online and face to face instruction with teachers.
- 32 Our mission and dedication to our students and the various needs we serve.
- 33 The flexibility as a teacher
- 34 The flexibility it offers students to meet their needs. Not all students flourish in a traditional school. Online school is a wonderful option for students and families.
- 35 Flexibility for teachers and students
- 36 I enjoy the flexibility that it allows for our families and the staff. We are able to conduct our job, while at the same time, be available for our personal families and life situations that come up. The owners are very generous to the staff and families of Epic and involved in everything. They really value the opinions of the staff and changes have often come as a result of staff recommendations.
- 37 How it is customized to each individual student.
- 38 flexibility

39 Teachers have a "classroom" of students that can move with the teacher throughout the students' career at the school; teachers can make their own schedule (to a degree);

40 The customization of education to each individual student

41 I love the relationship that is built between the teacher and the family in this one-on-one model.

42 I like the partnership I have with students and families. The relationship built around trust and the child's best interest enables us to provide the best opportunity for each student's success. I like that I'm encouraged to think outside the box and to cater to the individual student and his/her best interest. I have the support of senior admin to meet the needs of my students using my best judgement and professional experience. I like that I can meet with students in person, online and in groups. Epic has the best teachers in the state. We have a great support team of teachers that's built around the goal of making our school the best it can be. I do not need to be micromanaged and I feel that having the freedom to continue

43 Everything

44 I like how everyone is trying to improve the learning of our students.

45 The fact that we can reach students that brick and mortar schools cannot.

46 Flexibility

47 Flexibility for student/parent/teacher schedule and pacing. Those who want to work more quickly are able to & meeting times are ideal for the families.

48 The freedom to work one on one with the students and the families.

49 Epic allows teachers to connect with students for multiple years and truly make a difference in not only an educational aspect but a personal aspect as well.

50 The people I work with and the passion they have for improving student's lives.

51 I like the fact that each student has an individual learning experience and their education is developed based on their needs.

52 All of the options we provide and one on one instruction.

53 Flexibility and more interaction with students and family.

54 David Chaney and Ben Harris are great family people and believe in their employees I never want to leave them they are great men to work for Thank you!

55 I appreciate the resources and the administrative feedback that is given for constructiveness.

56 I feel like I get to connect with my students and build a deeper relationship compared to teaching in brick and mortar

57 Epic is committed to customizing the education of each child. Epic values parental input. Epic provides a multitude of choices for families. Epic values its teachers and compensates them accordingly. No local politics. No teacher or support unions.

58 The flexibility it provides to students and staff as well as the support from upper administration.

59 I appreciate that our school provides multiple opportunities for flexibility to meet student needs and interests.

60 The teachers and staff go above and beyond to help the students and other staff members.

61 Personalization, one on one

62 Educational leaders meet with teachers in their designated region every three weeks to discuss each individual student(s) strengths and weaknesses.

63 I appreciate the support that I get from my principal and mentor teachers.

64 The ability to meet each student's specific needs in their own personal learning path.

65 Flexibility in student learning

66 It's perfect for those students who for whatever reason are not able to attend a traditional school and who are self-motivated and good time managers.

67 I like that I can spend some one on one time with my students.

68 The variety of curriculum

69 The "team" spirit of Epic. ??? and ??? are amazing mentors! Love the people I work with. Amazing bunch of people!

70 I love working with the kids, and my principal is quick to respond to any questions

71 I like that we as teachers are not micromanaged and can bring in our expertise and way of teaching to teach each child individually.

72 Open communication and a strong commitment to empowering each and every student academically.

73 I like being able to develop an ILP for each student. This allows each student a chance to be actively involved in making decisions towards their learning goals and pacing needed to reach those goals.

74 The individualization for the students

75 The individualization of education.



- 76 The flexibility it allows for students and employees.
- 77 The flexibility and creativity that we, as teachers, get to provide for our students.
- 78 I like that students have the best opportunity to succeed at their best at their pace and their ability with choice of approved curriculum.
- 79 Being able to adapt school to individual's needs
- 80 I love that we allow families the flexibility of doing learning how and when they want to. We don't require a specific amount of time online, it is individualized based on the needs and abilities of the student.
- 81 What I like best about my virtual charter school is the freedom we have as teachers, parents, as well as students. As a teacher I can set my schedule around my family. As a parent I can do things for and with my family for fun or emergencies and do not have to worry about my child being absent. As a student they can choose the best time of day for them to learn.
- 82 The one on one attention our students receive from certified teachers
- 83 I love the flexibility and personalization it offers for our students, families, and teachers!!!
- 84 The impact that our model has on student's lives. I've seen amazing progress in our students through individualized instruction and the parent/teacher partnership.
- 85 I love how we can personalize and meet each student where they are and in their learning style.
- 86 The sense of unity to our mission of student success.
- 87 Individualized learning capabilities.
- 88 Everyone wants the student to succeed. I don't see students being left behind like I saw in traditional schools.
- 89 Our ability to customize education for each student is head and shoulders above any other school right now. We get to form real, lasting relationships with all of our students and families.
- 90 Flexibility.
- 91 The flexibility it provides me.

What do you like least about your Virtual Charter District?

Responses

- 1 The stress of making kids work daily and trying to make the parents understand the importance of a routine.
- 2 The current map assessment for PK-2
- 3 Getting students and parents to take virtual learning serious and the lack of parental involvement . Also virtual learning requires the teacher more indirect and direct time online to meet student needs and the various requirements in learning how to run all the curricula.
- 4 Holding kids to a pacing schedule and the determination of student truancy. Also, so many curriculums to manage and learn.
- 5 New mandates that have to be implemented immediately, without teacher input.
- 6 Students who enroll thinking it will be an easier route than traditional school.
- 7 too scattered out.
- 8 The work ethic of some students.
- 9 I would like to have some learning centers available for one on one instructure use.
- 10 I feel that there is not enough teacher/mentor relationships in the field.
- 11 We are unable to help every family to comes to us. This model is for a lot of people but not everyone.
- 12 We do not have a sports program
- 13 No vacations
- 14 The challenge of keeping older students motivated and on track
- 15 Arbitrary nature of our compensation plan. Bonus structure is a positive and negative. It provides an added stress that may be unnecessary.
- 16 I feel sometimes it is hard because so many different things are added to the students work load as the year progresses.
- 17 Goal oriented and driven with student interest and success at heart.
- 18 There is a significant learning curve in the beginning of working for EPIC. I wish there had been someone I could talk to face to face to answer my questions when I first started with EPIC. Videos, emails, phone calls, etc. are nice, but face to face would have helped me learn faster. PLC's are face to face, but there really isn't a lot of time to just get my questions answered. I usually leave PLC's feeling less confident than before I got there because we are so bombarded with information, there's just too much to soak in.
- 19 I feel that the school is growing so quickly that it is often difficult for EPIC to keep up with the demands.

- 20 The parents often do not realize their responsibility toward the students education
- 21 The most challenging aspect of working at Epic is that you are typically working in isolation. As an educator in a virtual environment one must take extra steps to create a collaborative learning environment in which to support your fellow peers and bounce ideas for student learning around.
- 22 I think its hard for the students to take high stakes tests (OCCT's and EOI's) in a building they are not used to.
- 23 Not having parents fully invested in child education to help them get work done and continue learning.
- 24 We are growing so fast our systems can't keep up sometimes
- 25 Not getting to see my students everyday
- 26 Growing pains are tough sometimes, but a necessary part of serving the exponential number of students reaching out to us daily.
- 27 Not having control over what my students are doing
- 28 Communication is harder in the virtual model
- 29 Working with all grade levels and the challenge of making students and parents to take ownership of their education in a virtual model.
- 30 There are a lot of families that should send their students to brick and mortar but continue to stay with Epic hurting their child.
- 31 Not enough interaction with other members
- 32 Professional Development is called "PLCs" but are not true PLCs; the bonus schedule is complicated and when administrators share specific data pertaining to it, they don't clearly explain it (data overload).
- 33 There are times when email communication makes situations take longer. :)
- 34 Sometimes I do not like the inconsistency. I've had a new principal each year. I have a wonderful principal and am hoping I can continue to grow with her, but based on past years I will have a new principal again next year. If somethings not broken then don't try to fix it. Also, it is difficult to get clarity with bonus payouts. It sometimes takes months to have a response to an email when inquiring about a bonus calculation error. We need some transparency when it comes to bonus payout. I wish upper admin would ask for more (experienced) teacher input.
- 35 Nothing
- 36 The technology part just because that is my weakness. They do a great job. It's me that struggles.
- 37 The fact that some students and families attempt to take advantage of the program.
- 38 need more "hands on" training for new teachers to learn how to get going.
- 39 I think we have grown so fast, and so large, that information goes out or a process is implemented without enough testing. Principals have changed several times in my 3 years here, so that may be part of the issues as well.
- 40 That there is a lot of paper/forms to fill out
- 41 The consistency of the Principal in our district. I have had 5 different principals in 5 years. And each of them has a different method.
- 42 The job is 24/7 and very stressful. I sometimes worry that we are not doing enough to prepare students for life, but we are getting them prepared to take tests.
- 43 Everything can be very overwhelming. There are times when there is no way you can get caught up and you feel you are just treading water.
- 44 Constant changes
- 45 The nature of virtual school can be isolating for students and teachers.
- 46 I don't have a least.
- 47 n/a
- 48 I don't like having to withdraw students who aren't working. It's a hard but necessary rule set up by the school.
- 49 Administrative compensation is below level of brick and mortar counterparts.
- 50 Deadlines that do not give enough lead time to complete the task
- 51 This virtual learning situation does not lend itself well to the instruction of writing.
- 52 We need more Starbucks at our PLC meetings.
- 53 The graduation support management department and its ability for accurate and timely information
- 54 GSM department
- 55 I think there are many parents/students who opt to leave a traditional school and transfer to virtual school thinking they won't have to work or try as hard. These are the types of students who are not successful in this type of learning environment.
- 56 That there isn't enough time in the day
- 57 The rumor that Jim Rector may not be SE district principal if Epic has to restructure!
- 58 I have a hard time getting in touch with the SPED director.
- 59 I feel that the data is skewed in several ways and does not reflect the correct data for each student (pertaining to

separate curriculums). We as teachers feel that the upper management does not get a real feel for what the teachers go through or ask and take in consideration the teachers schedules. It is constantly changing in Epic and it would be nice for them to ask what works and doesn't work for us as a whole. We have many great ideas that could help make Epic improve so I guess just to have our voices really heard.

60 No complaints

61 I do not like that upper admin often seems to not want to answer questions that teachers have about their bonus as far as specifics.

62 The difficulty of facilitating parental buy in for the partnership that must exist with parent, student, and teacher.

63 I miss the conversations in the hallway or lunchroom of impromptu brainstorming.

64 Constant focus on state testing

65 I dislike the length of the bench mark tests for grades K-4.

66 Too many curriculum choices results in teacher's not knowing what standards are being covered

67 What I like least about my virtual charter school is that there are many late nights getting reports in or developing curriculum for students, but I would be doing that with any school I would be working at!

68 The large amount of incoming and outgoing students on any given day, and the effects of how it interrupts student learning and progress.

69 There is becoming an increased pressure to perform on state testing for all students. For some special education students, the focus should me more on academic improvement each year.

70 This is more of a statewide issue. RTI takes longer than it should. Students with special needs need help faster.

71 We do not get to collaborate with other teachers as much as in a traditional school.

72 We are new and don't have it all figured out yet. It will happen, just not right now.

73 Students having trouble with Internet in remote locations.

74 We are just finishing up with state testing, so my thoughts wander straight to this. Since our students don't come to a building everyday, chasing families down to make sure that everyone is tested can sometimes be a huge task.

75 New teacher on boarding and continuous learning has been lacking in the past. This is especially true for teachers who are hired on the middle of the school year. I know that our school is making efforts to improve in these areas and am confident that future professional development will be much more effective.

76 Lack of communication at times. In a virtual environment, communication has to be strong and I feel we don't always excel in this area.

77 N/A

What is one suggestion you would like to offer to improve your Virtual Charter District?

Responses

1 I think more direct training on how to use the various curricula and more training on the use of programs or services to make managing students easier would be great, ie Google classroom or something similar would be helpful.

2 To let all the staff know when a new teacher is employed

3 Stricter truancy and pacing schedules. Reduction of curriculum choices.

4 More teacher input.

5 don't give one person too much to do. Hire another person so the job can be done well.

6 none

7 Learning centers would be very helpful.

8 Direct training on individual curricula

9 Training is always a great tool. There is always something to learn to better ourselves & the role we have at Epic.

10 The school should offer a sports program.

11 It will be beneficial to consider teacher's opinions/inputs when decisions are being made about individual students as opposed to just looking at their data.

12 Give paid vacations

13 Having a Strategies for Success class that is required for new students and students going into high school.

14 Reevaluate the compensation plan for teachers. More pay monthly vs incentive-based pay.

16 Behavioral and counseling services other than education or curriculum driven counseling/guidance

17 I'm not sure how, but the training process needs to be more streamlined and consistent.

18 I feel that more support for special education is needed. It would be nice for each district to have a special education admin to help with paperwork, answering questions, training, and meetings.

19 Provide a parent handbook prior to enrollment with a guide line of what to expect.

20 While Epic continues to grow by leaps and bounds I would like to see more fluidity in communication between senior administration and the educators on the front lines. I would like for communication on current issues to be delivered on the front end of an issue rather than mid-stream or as an after thought. I also think our families would benefit from beefing up our counseling/GSM department. Having GSMS that are knowledgeable about concurrent enrollment, scholarship opportunities, career planning, etc. is vital in helping our students to transition from high school to post high school.

21 I wish we required out MAP testing to be at the state testing centers (and at least once a year with the same check in policies as state testing so they would be more comfortable with the process on the state tests).

22 On how to have a talk with parents and train them on how to be the co-teacher to their child.

23 na

24 Continuous improvement model is appreciated

25 New teachers need another teacher to mentor them through the process not an admin leader

26 More sped employees

27 Having support staff to the GSM's that are direct teacher mentors for new staff that spends scheduled one on one time with the new staff to better equip them in their first year of teaching. Having regional testing coordinators that work directly with testing administrators and that oversee the students and teachers in a region to insure maximum testing efficiency.

28 Better prepare high school students for all EOIs and have some sort of program/contact with them about life after high school.

29 Have a gathering of all the same grade students to meet as a social event once every other month at a center.

30 Communicate when office/administration persons quit/leave or new persons are hired. Having to learn that information through the grapevine or on the fly gets frustrating.

31 I think mentors to new teachers would help those teachers.

32 I feel that I'm an expert in my field. I do not need to be micromanaged. I am continually reevaluating myself and my performance. I take action and continually look for ways to improve and to improve out school. It is a privilege to work for Epic. I am encouraged to be the best teacher I can be. Through the years I've learned that each of us teachers has our own way to help our students reach their full potential. Just as students do not want to be put in a box, teachers do not want to be put in a box. It is my hope that I will have the freedom to continue to master my craft and will not be "told" how to do what I do best.

33 It's great!

34 I think Epic does a wonderful job, and I am proud to be a part of it.

35 Improved communication and clear expectations from upper administration to the teachers.

36 Teacher pay/employment protections. If a teacher earns a large bonus and the front office does not want to pay out, they may very easily terminate that employee.

37 more "hands on" training for new teachers to learn how to get going.

38 Find a better way to assess testing readiness than the MAP. Six of my students that weren't projected to pass OCCT tests, scored proficient or advanced on their tests (computer tests in which we know cut scores). Maybe put together videos such as Katie Myers epic math coach tutorials for each testable subject to coordinate with Study Island mastery?

39 More teacher get togethers to get to know them.

40 I feel there needs to be a more just performance bonus breakdown. Rather than an all or nothing model of above, 70% or 75%, there needs to be a more organized structured pay out method.

41 Have a focus on college/career readiness and not just standards/test taking

42 More one on one training (in person) or job shadowing for new teachers.

43 Work on communication

44 Hold regional informational face-to-face meetings with parents twice a year. Parents would get to meet administrators and it would provide reinforcement on expectations.

45 That they keep up with state to hold our jobs because Epic is a great team to work for.

46 n/a

47 Unsure

48 Athletics

49 None

50 It seems that there continues to be a need for the cycle of refinement in the area of communication. Teachers are sometimes the last to receive information.

51 Issue laptops and tablets to all teachers rather than one laptop or one tablet.



52 Offer grade specific or age specific graduation support managers that are knowledgeable for those specific needs of students in that age/grade level.

53 Better communication from GSM department and working at a quicker pace from GSM's so that students aren't put in touch predicaments their senior year.

54 Sometimes it is so overwhelming on things we have to do. Maybe spread it out.

55 A technology boot camp from Beasley would be great! We spend tons of time on technology problems that could be an easy fix if we knew a few more things to do with our families to fix computer problems.

56 To have an open forum for teachers to be questioned. All that upper management implements, we would like for them to then ask us how it worked or didn't work and improvise. The information on pay along with bonuses written and well laid out.

57 n/a

58 For central office to be more reachable when phone calls and emails are made by not only staff but parents

59 Parent meetings before school begins and periodically throughout the school term would improve the partnership with families and the school.

60 Allow teachers to focus more on teaching our students and less time on data

61 I really enjoy working for this school!

62 Reduce the amount of curriculum being offered

63 Collaboration between teachers is what I would like offered to improve our virtual charter school. Just some time to talk about how we work with our students or just to discuss highlights and to share ideas.

64 I don't have anything at this time.

65 Change the standards for measuring the success of our special education students each year to meeting their map test goals vs achieving a proficient score on all state tests.

66 Adding more college prep classes/AP classes.

67 None, I believe they are always on the search for the best way to improve and they are very good at implementing new procedures and policies to fit those findings.

68 Attract more high performing students.

69 I would like to see a mpre work from specialist in each core area like we saw with math this year. It was a huge help

70 Continue focus on teacher development to allow EPIC teachers to stay on the "cutting edge" of virtual and blended learning techniques.

71 That office based staff respond to all messages within 24 hrs

Appendix B:
Parent Survey Results

Parent Survey

Surveys Completed: 351

Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Statistical Data

This survey is about my child's Virtual Charter District	
1. My child is enrolled in the following level:	Responses
K-3 rd grades	7%
4 th -6 th grades	25%
7 th -8 th grades	23%
9 th -10 th grades	27%
11 th -12 th grades	18%
2. How long has your child attended this virtual charter school?	Responses
1-2 years	86%
3-4 years	10%
More than 4 years	4 %
3. Has your child attended any of the following schools before enrolling in this virtual charter school?	Responses
Private School	12%
Charter School (brick and mortar)	4%
Public School within your neighborhood/community	81%
Other Virtual Charter School	11%
Homeschool	21%
4. Which reason(s) below best describe why you chose to enroll your child in this virtual charter school?	Responses
a. I believe my child was not receiving adequate protection (e.g. bullying) in previous school	32%
b. I believe my child was not succeeding academically in his/her previous school	35%
c. my child needs the flexibility for his/her schedule (e.g. due to traveling, health issues, sports)	31%
d. this school is my child's last resort (he/she was expelled/suspended from previous school)	1%
e. my child progressed from being homeschooled in the lower grades and will require subject area expertise I cannot provide in the higher grades	5%
f. my child is an accelerated learner and this allows them to progress at a faster pace	8%
*g. Other (please specify)	22%

*See Comments for option g at the end of this survey

Survey Questions

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	Our Virtual Charter school's mission statement is clearly focused on student success.	49%	39%	12%	1%	0%
6	Our school's mission statement is formally reviewed and revised with involvement from parents.	30%	36%	30%	4%	0%
7	Our school has established goals and a plan for improving student learning.	41%	43%	13%	2%	1%
8	My child's teachers provide a curriculum that meets his/her learning needs.	56%	32%	7%	4%	1%
9	My child's teachers give work that challenges my child.	50%	38%	10%	2%	0%
10	My child's teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities.	50%	30%	14%	5%	1%
11	My child's teachers meet his/her learning needs by individualizing instruction.	54%	31%	9%	5%	1%
12	My child's teachers work as a team to help my child learn.	51%	28%	16%	4%	1%
13	My child's teachers help me to understand my child's progress.	54%	32%	10%	4%	1%
14	My child's teachers keep me informed regularly of my child's academic progress.	53%	33%	7%	5%	2%
15	My child knows the expectations for learning in all classes.	52%	38%	8%	2%	1%
16	My child's teachers report on my child's progress in easy to understand language.	53%	34%	9%	3%	1%
17	My child sees a relationship between what is being taught and his/her everyday life.	31%	41%	22%	5%	2%

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18	My child is given multiple assessments to measure his/her understanding of what was taught.	43%	44%	10%	3%	1%
19	My child has up-to-date computers and other technology to use in learning.	50%	38%	10%	1%	2%
20	My child has access to support services based on his/her identified needs.	46%	37%	11%	4%	2%
21	Our virtual charter school provides qualified staff members to support student learning.	47%	38%	11%	2%	2%
22	Our virtual school provides a safe learning/assessment environment.	60%	34%	5%	1%	0%
23	Our virtual school provides students with access to a variety of informational resources to support their learning.	48%	39%	10%	2%	1%
24	Our virtual charter school provides excellent student support services (e.g., counseling, and /or career planning).	27%	31%	34%	4%	3%
25	Our virtual charter school provides opportunities for students to participate in activities that interest them.	30%	35%	26%	6%	3%
26	Our virtual charter district ensures equity and the effective use of financial resources.	38%	39%	20%	2%	0%
27	My child is prepared for the next grade level in the next school year.	44%	39%	12%	3%	2%

Written Responses

28. What do you like best about your child's virtual charter school?

Responses

1 My kids finished school early...like by 2 months!!! Its work at your own pace, so my 11 year old would do all his work on Monday and Tuesday and have free time the rest of the week!!!

2 Flexibility

3 The flexibility is wonderful!

4 She can do school whenever she chooses and at her own pace.

5 It's let's her do her work at her own pace I like how they get to choose their courses.

6 She is learning more at her own pace

7 I like that we have choices when it comes to education. A safe learning environment, free from bullying and bad influences.

8 We love that our 10 year old was allowed to learn at her own pace, which is very, very quickly. In the B&M, she was held back to the pace of the average children in her class, and the "gifted" program consisted of one hour/one day per week! She started Sept.2015 in the 4th grade, and after scoring at the top of the charts in daily work and assessment testing, she is skipping 5th grade and starting Sept 2016 in the 6th grade. We had already been told by the administration at her B&M that this would not be permitted. We feel it is through the efforts of her teacher, Mrs. ?? that this happened. Mrs. ?? chose a curriculum that worked with our student's learning style to address her PERSONAL needs, and worked through the whole year one-on-one to ensure that adjustments to assignments and supplemental curricula and activities would keep our student not just involved, but engaged. She was amazing, and because EPIC teachers have multilevel classes, we'll be able to have her teach our girl in 2016/17 and all the way through graduation if we choose! Another thing we like is the Learning Fund, used to purchase curriculum, school supplies, and extra curricular activities like art lessons. It has really opened doors for us. The virtual public school is an amazing concept, and we'll never go back to B&M!

9 Her teacher was great.

10 allows learning at own pace

11 It gives her the freedom to work in a setting that encourages her best learning ability.

12 I have a lot of "say so" in their education, and I love how our teacher and I are a team!

13 Flexible

14 His grades have improved and one on one with his teacher helps him with that.

15 We enjoy the time flexibility for her schooling. It also keeps schooling very low stress for my daughter.

16 Being able to work at our own pace instead of being rushed

17 They help my child stay on track

18 His teacher ??

19 Individualized plan for my daughter and excellent support. Ms ?? has been amazing!

Encouraging ?? to do her best and showing her ways to succeed

20 The difference in his over all attitude towards learning.

21 i like the way it changes with the way you learn

22 i like it because it goes with what their learning it dont get harder unless they understand it and then it goes back to be easy and i like that

- 23 My child can learn at their own pace and the flexibility.
- 24 His teacher comes to our house, and before she leaves makes sure my son and I understand everything
- 25 The convenience of the day
- 26 That she has schedule that is flexible enough for her to do things.
- 27 his teacher !!!
- 28 The freedom Learning Fund Our teacher ??
- 29 not having him in a public school facility
- 30 I love the flexibility it offers. I love that I know my son's teacher and talk to her via text, email or in person regularly. I love that my son's teacher is a partner with me in helping my son get the best education for him possible.
- 31 We love the flexibility of the program also the teaching method of the lessons is wonderful and entertaining.
- 32 Knowing that he is getting the kind of personal attention he needs to succeed.
- 33 the teacher is always willing to help and accommodate my child to succeed
- 34 It's much easier for him to understand.
- 35 One teacher for all subjects (except foreign language) for all 3 of my children.
- 36 Flexibility. Speed of advancement in curriculum
- 37 That they can repeat the lessons until they master them. I also really like that I am more informed and involved in their school work, grades, and teacher. Epic Charter is one of best choices I've made concerning my children's education.
- 38 That he works on his time. And that he doesn't have to go from class to class.
- 39 It supplies the necessary tools for her education and her teacher shows an interest in her individually.
- 40 They can make their own time in doing their work
- 41 I can teach him anywhere
- 42 He has increased his knowledge beyond what he would have learned if he had stayed in the public school that is near us. He was also able to learn the things he should have learned in his last year of public school.
- 43 She is able to learn at her own pace.
- 44 I love the flexibility she has to do all her activities, especially when she has to stop and help me due to health issues.
- 45 Flexibility.
- 46 They can learn at their own individual pace. They are able to take breaks when needed and move along faster when needed. Halfway through the year I learned how to monitor their progress and help them stay focused.
- 47 The fact that my child has an outstanding teacher that does everything to help my child succeed.
- 48 my child has a much better one on one relationship with her teacher.
- 49 It is not based upon administrations whims and personal agenda
- 50 I spend time with him and keep him safe and I try to teach him
- 51 Everything how hard it is to get I touch with the staff
- 52 They are held accountable to someone other than us as parents. At public school there seemed to be "teachers pets" and they had different rules. Makes her comfortable
- 54 It's convenient
- 55 its at her own pace

56 Flexibility.

57 I like the support and the flexibility.

58 How well the teacher is.

59 I really like my child's teacher. He is attentive and available. He goes above and beyond. He understands her situation is a bit different and does everything in his power to accommodate and help her accomplish her goals. The idea of Epic is a great one as well if all the moving parts work together and have the same goal.

60 There are a lot of visuals and texts that can be read to him. Since he is on an IEP, his reading level is very low. I feel the curriculum is better suited for him.

61 We love our teacher! Mr. ??

62 The schedule

63 She's out of public school

64 He can work at his own pace.

65 Flexibility and his teacher.

66 The teacher, Ashlee Worley, is the best part of our EPIC experience.

67 That she loves it

68 Fairly easy to use. The concept is intriguing.

69 The teacher, ??, is awesome. She is the BEST part of EPIC schools.

70 My child has moved up 2 grade levels for both math and reading per year since starting 2 years ago.

71 Ease of general use and tracking progress

72 The learning process

73 The relationship we have as a family wit their teacher.

74 Teacher, flexiblility

75 Teacher, flexible hours

76 I like that it allows her to have flexibility with her schedule and that she can still learn at home and have a teacher to help her and I with the process. I also like that I can choose her curriculum.

77 I like that I can choose from a variety of curriculum.

78 Teacher

79 One on one meeting with the teacher.

80 I like that I have choices that I can make (together with our teacher) to insure my children's success. If something obviously isn't working, then we have the flexibility to try something else.

81 The teacher and knowing she cares about my child

82 Learning fund and spending time with my child

83 I love my child's teacher and that we can work from home

84 Learning fund and spending time with my child

85 working at his pace

86 the ability to learn at rate that best fits my child. Also the teacher.

87 I love that all 4 of my children can work on individual needs. Even my twins are not tied to doing the same work and can work on personal needs and interests.

88 Flexibility

89 Love that a teacher is always quick with a email or call back when we need answers.

90 She can access her school work at any time

91 Our teacher

92 Our teacher.

93 Flexible schedule. Awesome Teacher!

94 Name mentioned

95 I like how your child can learn on their own pace and no problems with other kids. Our Teacher is the best caring, helping and always there to help! It is hard to get that anymore with public schools. You also do not have to worry about how many days you miss and that is a problem with public schools. I like everything about this school. I see enrollment going up in the next 2 years.

96 I feel that Map testing coupled with Study Island is a huge asset in my child's growth in reading and math. He was behind in the areas and is now up to speed with his grade level.

97 I love that she has flexibility and learning in a fun way.

98 Our teacher's flexibility

99 Very good teacher great with help if needed challenging curriculum more than the public school they attended

100 It's better than brick and mortar school that is all I can say.

101 The learning at his own pace. May not be normal pace but he is learning his way and the stress has lessened.

102 There are so many excellent resources! The website alone offers a huge number of links to quality resources. The teachers we have had the opportunity to work with have been stellar, caring, amazing educators.

103 His teacher

104 Customized Flexibility Work at own pace in conjunction to workload of coursework.

105 They can do it from home.

106 That it is available 24 hours a day.

107 This has been a wonderful experience.

108 I like that they helped with the supplies to get him started and the curriculum was easy to grasp. I like his former teacher, ??.

109 Our teacher

110 Our teacher ??

111 Our teacher ??

112 Her teacher is very supportive.

113 This School has Given Him The Learning Academics For What I Was Looking For Out Of The Public Schools, In Which I feel He Did Not Get From Public School. He Has Come Very Far Within This School, So Thank You To His Teacher Whom He Feels Very Comfortable With & Epic Charter School.

114 He can work at his own pace without teachers rushing him looking over his shoulder and kids bothering him

115 Flexibility

116 Flexibility

117 Schedule flexibility

118 Being able to set our own schedule around doctors appointments and therapies.

119 Gives an opportunity to help my child learn and grow in a different way. Gives us freedom to make our own schedules as needed.

120 I like that they stay on top of letting you know how your child is doing.

121 The flexibility of learning styles and freedom from anxiety.

122 The ability to substitute online courses for something that fit my child better.

123 She can go her own pace. And no making her out of place or laughing at her.

124 All the help, tutoring and programs we had access to Work on their own List of daily assignments Graded so I didn't have to

125 I like the flexibility to use a curriculum that meets my child's needs; and the expertise, skills, attitude and involvement of his teacher.

126 The fact that he is improving and prefers this school to all the others he has attended. I believe the ability to redo work at his own pace takes away the negative peer pressure of not getting it the first time around and in addition to him actually learning it is increasing his self confidence and improving the outlook for his future.

127 My daughter is thriving in this learning environment.

128 Being able to actually meet his teacher and keep in touch regularly

129 Independent learning

130 I like it that my children are able to get their work done in a better learning atmosphere. They get a lot accomplished.

131 He loves being able to work at his own pace, he is actually a year ahead now. We love the flexibility and the different learning paths we can use.

132 Curriculum choices

133 My daughters teacher is awesome and the flexibility of the program.

134 The individual pace where subjects can be worked on easier if there is a problem with the subject

135 We are extremely pleased with our daughter's teacher, ?? She is extremely helpful, and truly interested in our daughter's success. Our daughter can go to school in the comfort of our own home, stress free.

136 Our teacher is fanrastic. Very helpful and supportive of both the kids and I as a parent.

137 Her teacher is awesome. She takes the time to explain when we have problems, making sure my child understands.

138 It's a good school and my kid don't have to worry about bullying

139 Flexibility

140 Our teacher!

141 Flexibility

142 That I have control over my son's learning. Our teacher trusts me.

143 great people anytime I have had to call the office they always made sure my issues had been taken care of and I love taking the kids to the epic get togethers

144 No comment

145 She gets more attention from the teacher

146 The flexibility in scheduling coursework.

147 Flexibility, being able to pick resources that best suit my child

148 One on one with people who value knowledge and its applicable principle.

149 I like that he gets to work at his own pace and doesn't have to be bullied by students or teachers ?? has a wonderful teacher I'm so glad that we discovered Epic

150 Interest in child and encouragement

151 Definitely our teacher, Mr. ?? He has done an excellent job in getting my son ready for testing and caught up on several years of being inattentive and falling behind in learning at regular public school. He has provided us with tons and tons of resources and EPIC has exceeded my expectations tenfold.

152 Freedom. And their teacher ?? is great!

- 153 How much my child has excelled in all of his subjects
154 Her teacher, ??!!!
155 One on one help when needed
156 It was good for my kids and love it very much
157 flexibility
158 The ability to work at her own pace and start at the level she is on even if she is behind.
159 Easy to use and understand
160 The school is great, never had a problem.
161 Freedom of being able to go to Dr appointments and not miss any time at school.
162 The one on one, and the speed she is able to do
163 Individual learning program,freedom from schedules, focused all on him
164 The curriculum
165 The flexibility yet strong accountability
166 That his teacher cares and he can work at his pace.
167 She is excelling, and actually feels she understands the material
168 Flexible, nice and helpful.
169 Our teacher, ??.
170 She has improved so much.
171 Learning dine at there own pace
172 The way the teacher handles him in his learning
173 The flexibility
174 Their teacher! She is a wonderful person and has really helped my children reach a new level of learning. I wish all teachers could be just like her.
175 The teacher is awesome
176 Low stress.
177 It's at his own pace
178 She's at home.
179 It's a great program and I have 4 children and I have 2 on the program right now and the other 2 go on it after summer break
180 Flexible
181 ?? has been amazing! She has met our son at his academic place, challenged him, and worked with him in a variety of ways to achieve goals.
182 Everyone works together to provide help so the student understands and not just going through the motions.
183 It's based on his pace and he can do it on his schedule
184 Our teacher
185 Flexibility and individual pace.
186 Mr. ??!!!
187 Flexibility in schedule and tailoring curriculum to her needs
188 Flexibility of school work schedule.
189 They are prompt in getting back to me when I call with questions. and they are polite . And they give me access to things to teach with .
190 We can work on our own pace
191 Teaching that is uniquely designed for my son.
192 They are very understanding if a event comes up and my child cannot attend tutoring ECT.
193 The ability to have my child home with me everyday and learning together.

194 Easy communication with teachers

195 I like the fact that he isn't exposed to the wrong crowd and he gets one on one help weekly. I really like the tutoring how they give one on one and I pray that it continues, but more than once a week.

196 Not having to worry about them missing from being sick

197 She has excelled in this program

198 Teachers and adjunct services

199 Going at her on pace

200 Flexibility

201 Flexibility

202 The oddessy ware curriculim, his teacher, and what Epic provides

203 The ability for him to do school work anywhere, anytime.

204 It gives my child a chance to succeed without being in a social setting.

205 The support of the staff is outstanding on all levels. I have not yet found one person that was not kind and willing to help.

206 The freedom we have. To be able to work as we need to, for the amount of time we need. Nothing feels forced.

207 That I'm close by to see n know what she is learning and what she struggles with.

208 Teacher interaction

209 They can work at there own pace and my younger kids have fun activities.

210 Choice, customizable learning, adherence to state standards

211 Our teacher & no bullying

212 Our teacher and the flexibility.

213 They have the flexibility to work ahead Or stay in track. And if they don't know something we can spend extra time on it til they get it..

214 No bullying

215 The casual atmosphere and the fact that my children can work at their own pace.

216 Flexibility and being able to work at a fast paste. Not having to wait on others to move forward.

217 Its at his pace

218 I like the one on one

219 Differentiation and the ability to choose curriculum

220 True differentiation

221 The ability to have a dedicated teacher and group sessions.

222 He is happier & not fighting him to get to school

223 Flexibility and our teacher - we love ??!

224 I like the flexibility and that he can go at a pace that works for his learning style.

225 I like my child being able to learn at home but not having to be responsible for teaching her everything. The learning fund is nice as well.

226 Flexibility and pace. The stress level is low compared to public school.

227 I do think it challenged him. I think he really showed a lot of growth.

228 working at HER pace

229 Flexible on when he can work on homework.

230 Our teacher and the flexibility

231 She started out in an on line cirriculum and then it just got to hard. We put her in workbooks and she works in reading eggs and mathseeds. She loves it Plus she works in numerous workbooks.

232 I like having the flexibility and support of the school and the ability of my children to follow rabbit-trails in learning.

233 More Epic meet ups.

234 They are home and I feel they are safe

235 No bullies, he is more relaxed and can learn without fear

236 Our teacher

237 For my preschool child I like the options of different things we can teach him. Different programs/cirriculum.

238 Flexibility of schedule

239 I like the true parent/teacher partnership and 1-1 time designated for my child with his teacher.

240 That my daughter is more at ease on her school work that she doesn't have the pressure that she had in school, she doesn't have the Attitude, she is not tired and wore out and Stressed out like she was in school

241 That my child can work at his own pace.

242 The availability to learn at each child's set pace.

243 that she is able to do it the way she understands with help from her teacher

244 The freedom it allows our family to travel and do other things.

245 Schedule

29. What do you like least about your child's virtual charter school?

Responses

1 Nothing!!!

2 N/a

3 I don't like the compass program it can be confusing at times. Other then that my child hasn't been very involved with the school she gets behind in her work

4 Nothing

5 Tutoring online is not always adequate. Tutors need to address gaps instead of pushing a child forward when they need to go back and fix what is keeping them from moving forward on their own. A child that cannot work with fractions cannot move on to pre-Algebra.

6 Living in the Tulsa area, at times we feel a little left out of the "action." There are few activities, no PTA, no field days, sports, music, etc. The few activities we DO have are strictly parent organized. The offices in Tulsa are very nice, but vastly underutilized.

7 On line tutoring was a disaster. My child does better with a teacher one on one where she can work with her teacher.

8 you dropped the mifi service 6 weeks before school was out! I had no prior notification, no replacement source of internet access, and no response to my from tech report.

9 having to go to school site for testing due to distance.

10 Staring at the computer most of the time.

11 Nothing.

12 We had a very hard time with online tutoring. She NEEDED help with math but they kept scheduling her for reading. Even after her spring map testing showed she didn't need reading

tutoring and I asked many times for them to stop making her do reading tutoring. They made her read the same passage 5 times during 5 separate lessons. But that is the only thing we were unhappy with.

13 Nothing

14 Software and programs out of date and not free

15 nothing

16 i wish she would come every week

17 i wish the testing could be at the house

18 It would be nice to have more meetups for the high school students.

19 Right now I like everything

20 So far we love everything

21 Everything so far has been great for my child at this school.

22 The location of the testing facility I feel it is in a dangerous neighborhood too many people from the neighborhood walking through the parking lot. and looking around through the parking lot. I have also seen people pull up in cars and meet someone that comes from the neighborhood at the playground and go behind the wooden fence stay for a little bit and come out , or cut through the playground to go to the bowling alley next door seems dangerous.

23 Every curriculum we have tried is half done. The examples or walkthroughs very poorly explains how to mentally work out the problems or questions. A lot of the questions are worded to the point of not being able to understand them at the reading or math level of that grade level. Some don't even give an example how to work or solve them. I don't know how many times I have found fundamental problems with questions in the assignments and the tests. I also thought that the teacher would be more involved with my kids. A text once or twice a month is absolutely ridiculous. The involvement is horrible. I asked multiple times about where they are standing in terms of state standards through the year and I never got an answer. My kids where severely stressed at the load of work put on them the first half of the year. They were working 8 to 10 hours a day and was so far behind in assignment due dates, talking 2-3 months worth. That I was seriously considering pulling them. The teacher was no help in this time frame of how to get back on track. My kids have gotten burnt out multiple times through the year and could not get adequate help to get them lined back out. They would fail an assignment on purpose and I would ask the teacher to reset it, and it would take days before they could move on. Which would put them even farther behind. The FEV tutoring is absolutely horrible to. With our experience, we had scheduling issues. More than 4 times. Even after contacting higher up people. The tutor teaching reading couldn't even speak the correct language of what they were teaching multiple times.

24 All the testing throughout the year Inability to have state testing at our house

Miscommunication regarding what is required verses what is recommended.

25 hey don't they like public school now

26 No complaints.

27 Some of the courses for example the writing projects it is difficult for my child to upload his work. He is unsure where or how to upload it.

28 Having to go to Tulsa for testing.

29 there is nothing that I don't like

30 Difficulty in reaching support members and getting response from them.

31 There is nothing I like least

32 Don't really have anything

- 33 Sometimes the workload is too much.
- 34 To heavy of a assignment load on her
- 35 the computer having problems
- 36 It depends on the internet connection which can be spotty in the area we live.
- 37 Not enough teacher visits and counselor and career planning and activities for children in our area as field trips, dances etc.
- 38 There isn't really nothing I can say I don't like.
- 39 I don't like that they aren't notified about enrolling in technical schools.
- 40 Their teacher was horrible during the second half of the school year. She won't return emails, texts, and is rude when she finally does respond. We have saved most of the conversations. She did not give my boys proper attention or help them when they needed help. We actually have a meeting with her tomorrow for the 'end of year'....but haven't met with her in 2 months and have no idea what to expect since the boys are not done with their work yet.
- 41 Nothing.
- 42 That my child is able to call her teacher for help. She was too intimidated at public school
- 43 Nothing
- 44 Nothing
- 45 The flexibility, they set their own schedule and we can travel and school goes with us.
- 46 He can only do so much each day study island
- 47 Can't order Christian curriculum.
- 48 Na
- 49 The complications with her counselor loading her classes. When I first spoke with him he seemed to understand the goal and emphasized that Epic is the perfect place for my daughter because of the flexibility it has opposed to a brick and mortar school. But when it comes to loading her classes and helping her progress, there seems to be push back every step of the way. So the flexibility seems to be based on his opinion of what he thinks she can or cannot finish. It has been a frustrating situation for us. My daughter is making up credits, so the word wait or not yet is making this process quite stressful.
- 50 We will have to be traveling for him to take his EOI assessments. This is very hard for us to do.
- 51 Sometimes it's hard to meet with the teacher, but she's always available to at least talk. Mostly, I am concerned he's not being challenged enough. Sometimes his coursework only takes him 30 minutes. But we're trying to get him to slow down and take his time. Even if he's already making b's, being in school for less than an hour a day seems off.
- 52 Not enough assistance with assignments. At least in a timely manner
- 53 Working with the main office when there's a problem the teacher cannot help us with.
- 54 The delays in getting started at the beginning of the year were very frustrating for us.
- 55 She misses her friends
- 56 The cartoonish way of teaching is great for some students, very disruptive and annoying to others. Would like to have a choice between the styles.
- 57 The teacher, ????, has made our first year with EPIC much better. She bends over backward to be available to the student and the parent!
- 58 Lack of telling us or giving us information on free resources we have.
- 59 No real individual education. Canned learning and standardized testing are not education. And the LITERAL whitewashing of the Oklahoma history is just distusting!!! And I'm white!!!

Koch agenda... Had to stop and discuss the REAL reasons Native and AA people settled here!
And it wasn't voluntarily, or 'for new opportunities'...

60 Not many activities for our area

61 The school is growing at a very fast rate, I feel the staff is not growing as fast and not able to keep up.

62 Testing, tutors

63 Tutors, testing

64 At this point, there isn't anything that hasn't been helpful.

65 Testing

66 Not sure she is getting enough, like home economics and other

67 On success maker it does not explain how to do the work.

68 Just like in the brick and mortar schools, I think that many of the teachers have too many children. They spend so much time driving, and have so many children to try to deal with on an individual basis. It's very hard and makes some of them come across as inflexible, or even cranky, when they are just tired or overwhelmed. Less students per student, please.

69 Not alot of school activities to be involved in around our area

70 The lack of flexibility with regards to the curriculum and the lack of choices

71 Need more social studies, science and other electives

72 communication

73 No Sports

74 We love everything! Wish I would of done this at an earlier age!

75 The programs sometimes do not work as they should

76 Not able to participate in school sponsored sports

77 Fev tutoring

78 Their transcript is not updated. The one I received a couple weeks ago is the same as last October. 6 months ago

79 Old laptop that has glitches.

80 I have to say that this school is best for my child and I would pick this over public schools any day!

81 I do not like the EOI testings. I realize they are State driven but it's such a waste of time and energy that can be put to better use in my kiddo's education.

82 We didn't see our teach very much. And she didn't give us much instruction or information we are changing teachers next year!

83 Emphasis on standardized testing. Input and output based learning

84 The computer problems

85 We can never reach her teacher unless it isn't an important issue. Pls don't tell her this. The "mandatory" tutoring was ridiculous, my daughter knew all the material and was forced to go over it many times. More than once she was marked "absent" when I watched her log in myself. She has been sick and we are still trying to find out how much she needs to make up. We can never get an answer. My daughter is a trooper about getting help from outside sources when she is stuck because she rarely gets help from her teacher.

86 Nothing

87 I do not care for the traditional school calendar they follow as a whole. I would like to see a built it option for year round schooling instead of them having to make an exception for us every year. It makes it significantly more difficult to arrange curriculum.

88 The internet is slow sometimes

89 Lack of organization and communication. High school electives Science labs Foreign language is horrible.

90 I didn't get weekly reports like I did for my older children.

91 Apex materials don't have enough sure dates. Algorithm it uses to make assignments doesn't take into account materials between due assignments. Students should know what needs to be done each day.

92 Wish for summer options for enrichment or credit recovery

93 I was told several months ago he was approved for the 504 plan due to a diagnosis of ODD. My sister, who has a masters in education, said he should have been on an iep with ODD. I never heard back from that department at epic so I'm not really sure what good the 504 did for my child. I don't like the testing deadlines for an oppositional child. It's very challenging working with a student like this.

94 T-mobile Internet

95 T-mobile Internet service

96 Internet when it switched to T-Mobile. There are days where my kids can't even log in to do work because the service area is so poor even with the personal cell spot that t-mobile sent out

97 No support for those kids with learning disability.

98 Nothing.

99 Lack of socialization, when he left his school he stays in his room and doesn't want to come out. He needs to get out more but is to focused on world of warcraft and talking to people/friends out of state. It kinda worries me.

100 All the tests

101 All the testing.

102 Needs a way to let students participate in extra curriculars without the expense to the parents.

103 She was not given grade level work and her testing for IEP was not completed till school was almost over for the year.

104 Can't think of anything at this time!

105 I have no complaints, we love it and plan on enrolling him next year.

106 The educational system as a whole is too focused on standardized streamlined academic subjects. Subjects aren't integrated to support each other and overlap. This is true on the whole scale, not specific to charter school.

107 EOI's

108 Sometimes it does not read to her.

109 No Christmas or Spring break holidays. Sometimes overwhelming

110 A lot of the online studies are inferior but this is overcome by the ability to purchase other quality curricula through the learning fund.

111 Possibly, having to work a little harder to find social interactions for him, although he has only been in the school for 4 months...I may not have enough experience yet to make this choice about the school.

112 I can't think of anything.

113 Didn't understand why there were no text books

114 I can't think of anything.

115 I love it all!

116 no dislikes at this time

117 My daughter enrolled after the second semester had begun, so it took about 3 weeks to get her computer and mifi, and took her a while to get caught up on her work.

118 Everything being online and course work took so much time. Their teacher is helping us look into additional options for next school year.

119 Very hard to enroll. The enrollment person does not return phone calls. Took over a week and numerous phone calls to enroll.

120 jump around to much on his work and its hard to keep up and he's not able to learn like he needs to. for a IEP student gets to much work pail on him in several different area's..and he gets stress because he can't keep up..and the teacher knows he want pass he test at the end of the year and that's not good.

121 That my daughter can put off work when she doesn't feel like doing it.

122 Too much screen time

123 That I do not have enough learning fund money to purchase everything he needs to meet his IEP goals. I spend over \$300 each year on curriculum that meets his unique learning needs. He has an iep and the school gets more money for him but I do not get more money for curriculum but am required to use the learning fund on things we do not need or use.

124 i wish the testing site wasn't so far, it's about two hours away from me

125 No comment

126 I like everything about the charter school

127 They do not have enough knowledge of ncaa requirements and elective teachers and core teachers do not communicate

128 Activities are far away

129 Distance for testing.

130 I have nothing bad to say about Epic

131 Not being able to interact more with other students. We are in a smaller town with very few EPIC students.

132 Nothing

133 There is nothing that I don't like about my child school

134 Her language class (Spanish) is awful!! At the end of her second year she cannot speak any Spanish! If they are going to offer a language class needs to be some kind of conversational class. If they have to learn on their own then they need to speak it!

135 Work expectation should be explained on detail at the beginning of year

136 It was good

137 lack of direct teacher interaction

138 Having to prepare for testing that is not at her level.

139 Would like more teacher/student time

140 I feel like our teacher this yr had to many students on her roster, an didn't spend enough time with some of her students. When my daughter had a problem she would tell her to YouTube it or go to homework help or study island. I feel she really didn't communicate with me much, it was more with my children who are in 9th and 10 grade.

141 Lack of communication about progress.

142 The teen mobile mifi, won't work very good .

143 I wish they would educate parents more, and the computer rental is not good.

144 The time we have to wait on new modems

145 Parental portal

146 There's nothing that I dislike! :-):-)

- 147 It's school.
- 148 Sometimes the curriculum is too hard or not explained properly
- 149 Study Island Curriculum
- 150 I don't have any complaints regarding Epic.
- 151 N/a
- 152 Nothing.he's not around his peers
- 153 Feeling like we were out here on our own this year. We went through two teachers before we finally got one that cares about our children's education.
- 154 IEP- the therapists that are offered for these services are so rude that my son has been with Epic three years and we do not use these services. It's really a sad thing because they could really help him. Epic does not offer an alternative.
- 155 Needs more one on one and more resources for his unique disability
- 156 nothing
- 157 There's nothing I do not like.
- 158 Too much reading at times
- 159 Teachers don't visit weekly. Most teachers are not on student teaching level.
- 160 I have nothing to say but good things.
- 161 Very little interaction
- 162 There's nothing, but if I have to mention something it would be....well, I guess I won't mention anything because I truly can't think of anything.
- 163 Nothing.
- 164 His teacher! She isn't very efficient. She doesn't respond back to messages very fast and when she says she is going to do something she doesn't do it on time.
- 165 Parents do not know grades students have achieved in subjects.
- 166 Would like more opportunities for social interactions.
- 167 EOI Test! TOO much TESTING!
- 168 I wish my child could experience social activities that a brick and mortar school offer.
- 169 Some of the sessions isn't broken down to understanding math mostly
- 170 Not as much social interaction as he would like.
- 171 I have no complaints
- 172 Sometimes the workload seems like a lot
- 173 That he only gets one on one with his teacher once a week. I think it should at least be 3 times a week and that is the same for tutoring it should be at least 3 times a week.
- 174 Nothing
- 175 Not enough group based meetings
- 176 None
- 177 N/A
- 178 N/A
- 179 The support from his teacher is not what we anticipated.
- 180 Everything is great about Epic
- 181 I dislike the state testing, but I realize this is for the benefit of the school . The school does so much for my kids that I feel it is a small sacrifice. Even with this being what I like least, the staff has been so great and encouraging for my testers. We do have internet issues, as I live in a rural area, so I feel like perhaps that's out of the control of the school.

182 My daughter only needs 2 classes to graduate and was told No that she wasn't able to take those classes during summer. I wish you would allow a student who is only needing a few classes to finish that they are allowed to

183 The stress of choosing the right curriculum.

184 Nothing

185 Nothing at this time.

186 The computers mess up quite often.

187 Few extra curriculars

188 Meetups are too far away for us to attend.

189 Most social engagements are conducted outside of town (about 1 1/2 hours away)

190 That all the extra activities are 4 hours away in OKC. Would be nice if someone cared about the kids in the rural area. And trying to get extra help from the teacher when they are an hour away with fuel expense we can not go to the weekly meet up with the teacher.

191 Not enough field trips or social get togethers for the kids

192 I think the quarterly and end of the year tests are unnecessary.

193 The slowness of the computer programs.

194 The tutoring through fev

195 I would like for the curriculum to be more interactive and less redundant.

196 Lack of social support

197 Lack of social support

198 Classroom instruction for harder subjects and extracurricular.

199 His anxiety is so bad that state testing is a nightmare to get him there but so far I have got him there but I hate it cause we are both upset & I know he doesn't do good on tests because of being upset

200 Tutoring sessions that aren't an efficient use of time...they move too slowly

201 Sometimes the lessons seem to go over the info too quickly.

202 Sometimes learning fund \$ takes a really long time

203 N/A

204 Obviously, the lack of real personal interaction. Also, the online curriculum became very monotonous.

205 communication between school and parents could be better

206 Nothing negative to say at this time.

207 The stale tutoring sessions - it seems like the tutors are in multiple sessions with other kids and things move very slowly.

208 The Map testing for 2nd grade and under I thought seemed a little hard. Too many questions for that age.

209 TESTING

210 N/a

211 None

212 Activities

213 The on-line portion for preschoolers was tricky. We used waterford and was great a first but got to hard and he gave up.

214 No support from teacher or administratation, been asking for in person tutoring for math from teacher and it's never happened

215 I dislike the data-driven goals for students and teachers. I also dislike when test results are what drives instruction.

- 216 My teacher not telling us that we had to sign in for a class and told us 6 weeks after and we are STILL trying to catch up and we are going to have to do it next year.
- 217 I love epic and can't think of anything I dislike
- 218 The lacking of communication between the office personnel and parents (not teachers!!)
- 219 nothing
- 220 All the testing involved that requires a lot of travel . I do appreciate knowing my children are learning what is necessary though.
- 221 Not enough instruction on harder subjects

30. What suggestions would you like to offer to improve our virtual charter school?

Responses

- 1 You are doing perfect!!! No room to improve!!!!
- 2 Nothing that I can think of right now
- 3 You should have more class friendly activities like have highschool science class meet ups to do hands on projects for a grade and there should be more in person optional electives like drama class stem programs robotics etc. I know it's home school but I think the kids would enjoy it and it will take the edge off of being alone
- 4 None
- 5 There needs to be more activities for children to get together. Evenings and weekends, so working parents can transport. Also, a school thrives on creating a culture and promoting a family-like atmosphere. This is a virtual school, but unless there are means by which peers, staff, and family can interact more, there is no feeling of belonging or pride in one's school.
- 6 There really could be an improved sense of community and a more "school" feeling, with friendships and groups of kids with like interests. To do this, I think we should: 1) Coordinate with local public schools to offer access to things not now available to a virtual school, such as sports, chess club, choir, band, carnivals, field days, art shows, etc. After all, Epic students ARE public school students, and parents pay taxes so that public school students have access to these things. 2) At the same time, work harder to offer extra curricular activities through EPIC. For example, the Scripps Spelling Bee has been revived in our area and would be an excellent opportunity for motivated students. Expenses and fees could be paid for by the Learning Fund, a volunteer parent or teacher could be a coach on-site. How about a science fair, or juried art show? There are so many opportunities out there! 3) Have a Tulsa area liaison on staff who can work with parents on issues that we now have to deal with long distance in OKC, like Learning Fund or enrollment questions/processes, for instance. Effective communication with HQ is often spotty.
- 7 More time spent with the teacher. More time to meet with the other kids in the school.
- 8 Don't take away the internet service from an online school, seriously?
- 9 keep parents informed of needed improvement
- 10 Nothing
- 11 more meet ups and activities for students that do not live in okc and that cannot attend those meet ups and activities in okc due to no transportation
- 12 None.
- 13 Better communication between tutors, teachers, and parents.

- 14 Provide a list of different groups or activities that our children can participate in (example: band, science activities...)
- 15 Some updates to the software and free compatible student software
- 16 nothing
- 17 I would like to see my child being able to work all year round on his education.
- 18 do testing at home
- 19 i wished the teacher could come out more like every week
- 20 I love the math meet ups maybe more activities like this would also be great
- 21 All the curriculums need a parent control panel. The parents are the first line of help and defense on assignment control. A parent shouldn't have to beg or constantly hound a teacher to go in and fix things that the curriculum has messed up. Parents have absolutely no control with Epics system. Parents have no choice but to sit back and watch their kids get half what they need because there is absolutely no way for a parent to modify, slow down, speed up the work load. The teachers need to be more involved with everyday assignments or Epic needs to give a control panel or password access to do it. Doing it through texting, phone calls every 2 hours, and google hangout is not adequate enough for what these kids need. Epic need to give more control to the parents since they are the ones doing the teaching.
- 22 get teachers who know the curriculum and curriculums that actually work properly not the programs with so many bugs to work out
- 23 My son would like a group PE option. That's the only thing he misses from public school.
- 24 It would be nice if we could go back and review lessons that are already completed.
- 25 maybe more outings for other kids to get together
- 26 Meaningful study groups for students and other get-togethers.
- 27 More satellite locations for EOI's and other testing
- 28 so far we like everything that is offered
- 29 better computer
- 30 We were told to do a percentage per week per class in the program but that percentage is not very clear because it depends on the teacher grading everything that was done daily. Not possible when the teacher has 35 students from different grades and doing different programs. I think it would work better if the student knew that a chapter had to be done by this date.
- 31 More student activities in Midwest City area for students.
- 32 The only thing I could say to improve the school is, Nothing. Y'all are doing an amazing job.
- 33 Realize that every student can't go to college and that technical schools are viable alternatives. Notify parents that if their child would like to attend technical schools, what they need to do to get them enrolled in time. Be advocates for them like public schools are for their students.
- 34 Make sure the teachers have time for their students. Our current teacher when from decent to horrible because she has too much on her plate. It's not my children's fault that she feels that she can't do her main job and help them. I hope to have another teacher next year, only one of my boys wants to continue with epic due to lack of help. Also, it would be nice to have 'homework help' for 7th graders too.
- 35 Nothing.
- 36 I would like more social and extra curricular activities.
- 37 Better laptops
- 38 Yes

39 We are happy with our first year as homeschoolers and feel Blessed that we have an awesome teacher. We have referred several friends/family because they are fed up with Public school rhetoric like we were.

40 More tutoring

41 I love it. I am happy with the school

42 Na

43 Make sure that everyone understands that not every situation and student is the same. But that working as a team and having a common goal is a must. I don't want my daughter to say that she graduated on time in spite of the unnecessary obstacles when talking about Epic.

44 It would be nice if an arrangement could be made with the local school districts to provide administration of the EOI assessments.

45 I'm not even sure. The public systems around us are failing so hard at teaching that I really can't complain too much. I just want my son to be educated and he's getting a better education through this program than regular school. He's not forced to do a lot of grunt work, just to make sure the rest of the class gets it. He can move past the stuff he gets easily, and focus on the stuff that's hard. I like that. He's doing well.

46 Organize and train the office staff better

47 Reduce the assessments! The counseling office needs a more systematic approach to keeping parents abreast of the enrollment process.

48 More class mate get together

49 See above.

50 Communication from the counseling office about enrollment and keeping parents abreast of the status would be helpful.

51 All the teachers need to be more involved with the children. Our teacher the 1st year would come to our house and he bonded with her more. The teacher we had this year never has and my child has yet to bond with her half as much.

52 No idea because industrial learning is the way education is done these days....

53 Staff numbers should improve, remind new staff members to read and understand the schools Mission Statement.

54 Don't base a whole years work on one test, some kids get nervous and fail even when they know the work. Don't make tutoring mandatory.

55 Don't base the testing grades on their whole years work, some kids get nervous when testing and fail and need help through it emotionally. Make the tutors real people to come to your home, not a whiteboard.

56 Choosing an online curriculum is difficult because I can not see any samples of the actual curriculum to decide if it will suite her interests and learning style.

57 Computer we have had for three years runs slow

58 Meet with teacher more than twice a month Some subjects do not explain the answer well.

59 We, as a virtual charter school community built of students, parents and teachers, need more communication. We need more teacher/parents inside of groups of parents and the Tulsa area needs more activities for older students. We need a strong foundation with even stronger communication. Right now that is left to only a few people. We need more.

60 better improvement in communications of policies, procedures and the learning fund

61 a little more info on the curriculum choices. maybe a website to sample the different ones.

62 Offer Sports

63 Everything is perfect! We love our teacher and Epic

64 Fixing programs to work correctly

65 Get rid of fev tutoring

66 Better records.

67 Would rather have the funds for the laptop given to us to apply towards a newer model laptop that we purchase. More activities like the thunder basketball.

68 More clear and extensive information for new students/parents.

69 To have more meetings so the kids in their areas can meet and make new friends.

70 Outside of the EOI testing becoming extinct, I think what EPIC is doing is awesome and I've enjoyed the teachers we have had. I really think that the Map testing and Study Island (as well as the tutor program) are strokes of genius. I wish the public school system would implement these tools and forget about EOI testings. I have personally seen huge improvement in my oldest son's reading and math because of these tools EPIC has provided.

71 I would love to see a performing arts class! I also feel like parents should have an evaluation form at the end of the year to assess the teacher. I know when I working in education we were evaluated every semester.

72 Curriculum that emphasizes arts, creativity, and critical thinking.

73 You all do a great job as is

74 I had originally asked for the same teacher but now I wish to rescind that request. If you are going to require tutoring, at least make it challenging for the student so she won't get bored and irritated. There needs to be someone that parents can call when they have issues other than assigned teachers for curriculum problems and required tutoring. That was a nightmare. The tutoring place texted me at least 2x per day and emailed me at least 2x per day, starting at 7am which was not appreciated. When I emailed them to downgrade to just 1 text OR email per day, they stepped them up instead. I need to hear from someone that things will be different next year or I might look for other options.

75 Like I said above, I would like to see an option for a year round calendar.

76 I think the online school is doing a great job.

77 It does improve each year but it is still lacking organization. I didn't like being called to plan out next year and the person who called me not knowing the actual credits taken and needed for graduation. You should give all incoming high school students the high school checklist for graduation credits. It should be 'real' paper and not electronic. Students and parents should see it. More guidance should be given on college prep.

78 Weekly report on Oddeseyware.

79 Better teacher training on curriculums. Spanish has been a good class, but parents don't receive a weekly update. Daily assignments for Apex.

80 Had not thought about it until your survey but many of the lessons could be tied to current events and could reference news programs, news papers etc to teach critical thinking.

81 Expand your special needs department... If you want to continue growing as a better alternative to brick and mortar. If my son could have tested with his teacher he may have passed. Our wealthy attorney relatives made horrible comments to my son Braden about online school at home and from that point on I couldnt get him to log on. He's very easily affected by things. More flexibility and maybe counseling.

82 Verizon Internet

83 Verizon Internet

84 Go back to Verizon for Internet

85 Face to face tutoring program for those who need the extra help.

86 None That I Can Think Of So Far

87 I think the kids involved in charter that are close to each other need to meet up and get to know each other make friends socialize more and have more interaction with one another so they won't be alone. I know that'd help my son to make friends here and progress and blossom.

88 If she does not need FEV she should not have to take it.

89 If he does not need FEV he should not have to take it.

90 Needs a way to let students participate in extra curriculars without the expense to the parents.

91 Work with parents more with special needs children. There are rules but use them to the students advantage instead of just saying this is how it is and going on.

92 No suggestions at this time. Still getting to know the system.

93 I have no suggestions.

94 I would like to see students have a platform on line to interact with each other during study times as well as more outside of school social functions in the local area. I would like to meet more of the families of students in my child's age range.

95 Get rid of the one online class requirement, get a really good high school counselor, career advisor. We have asked and received no help with college prep, it has all been on our own.

96 More options for children that can't read

97 We used Odysseyware and to be honest, the quizzes are a bear. My son would read the lessons and then always fail the quizzes and tests. Sometimes I would help with the internet and we'd still end up failing. That's just discouraging. We had to just ignore their grades for these.

98 If you lower the learning fund again you will loose students. Part of the draw of Epic is the ability to fund students' studies (eg, Spanish) and activities (eg. Soccer).

99 I need more time with the school and j com enemy in order to make any educated suggestions.

100 More classes offered on the South side of Oklahoma City. All of the meet-up classes are too far away from us.

101 Expand to different parts of Oklahoma.

102 I do not know of any. I think Epic is Epic!

103 Needs more local activities.

104 More opportunities to meet other teens that are also enrolled in Epic.

105 Having more elective class to choose from..

106 Curriculum options that are more hands on.

107 For IEP students stay with one area in there work so they can start understanding there work so there self stem will cone up and they know they can pass the state test.

108 Allow the special Ed director to authorize a learning fund increase to students with ieps so that they can meet their goals.

109 I have a great teacher now, but I started in the middle of the school year with a teacher that was also new and not knowing anything about online school I had lots of questions and I was very stressed because she couldn't answer them. so maybe a little more training for the new teachers

110 If a parent needs help figuring things out to help their child please don't mane the parent feel stupid please help the parent. Most parents are single parents that work until after 5 in the evening.

111 There is none

112 More effort and research needs to be put into athletic students and their needs.

113 To better evaluate choice in curriculum so that parents could make better choices

114 Flexible EOI for those who live outside metro area.

115 Nothing right now I think Epic is great

116 I am usually good at this part, but I can't think of a single thing. EPIC has been our greatest school experience.

117 Just keep being the amazing school that you are

118 I know that this is a "virtual school" but teachers having 35+ students is ridiculous!!

Although ?? is an amazing teacher as well as a person he now has so many students he has little time to spend with his students individually.

119 Tutors should take refresher courses, because school materials change. I've had them give wrong answers more than twice

120 Keep up the good work

121 have backup / secondary teacher available when primary is not available

122 I believe that your system is a great system. The things that I would change are all state or federal things not actually Epic things.

123 Na

124 Update your mifi with one's that actually work. We have a metal roof an can't get any service inside our home. Update the laptops as well would be a great idea.

125 Access to what percentage my child has done in any of their subjects in the parent portal.

126 None

127 Parent education

128 When the computer or mifi box goes down the time should be expedited so that our children don't lose any learning time.

129 Not at this time.

130 Explain things in different ways ID the child doesn't understand the original explanation.

131 Allow Teaching Textbooks to be a main math curriculum. I know it's not part of the core curriculum but using it instead of the other math curriculums raised my children's scores on testing.

132 None

133 Have someone checking up with the teachers to make sure they are involved with their student's and that they are doing monthly visits.

Epic Virtual Charter Parent Survey

134 More activities outside of school!

135 More curriculums that's for visual, kinetic an auditory learner.. curriculums that will help kids that has dysgraphia

136 Think the system is working just fine!!

137 more communication maybe

138 Field trips, maybe???

139 Everything we really needed was provided.

140 Teachers to be more efficient.

141 Up to date language curriculum.

142 More input into what a student takes in High school-instead of it just being assigned.

143 I would like to have some kind of academic clubs such as Art Club, Spanish Club, German Club and other to help facilitate social interaction among Epic School students.

144 More lessons too explain too those that need more explanation

145 We love Epic and our teacher ??

- 146 Allow teachers to meet with students at least 3 times a week
- 147 Nothing
- 148 See above
- 149 None
- 150 Good as is.
- 151 Good as is.
- 152 Inform parents on what teachers are available in their area, so they may make a change if they desire. Allow parents a list of expertise each teacher possesses in order to make an educated choice. Identify how many hours per month the teacher should work with each child one-on-one, in a class setting, or via video-teleconferencing. Send out regular parental emails identifying what is to be expected from teachers, parents and students.
- 153 We have been with Epic for a while, and they continue to make improvements each year. I could not be more pleased with this school.
- 154 Allow summer courses To Those Who Would Like To GRACE early
- 155 Nothing atm
- 156 Nothing at this time.
- 157 The option to retake tests and lessons if they make bad grades.
- 158 Some local opportunities for students to meet up, learn together and socialize.
- 159 Make meetups in our area as well.
- 160 More meetups in our area.
- 161 Making the kids in NE OK feel like they belong have activities for our kids up here instead of cattering to the ones in the city.. Find some better curiculums that makes since to our kids and that builds them up. For kids coming out of the public schools it is hard because some are so far behind its not funny..
- 162 Have an employee dedicated to set up functions that both teach and play
- 163 Easier transactions with the vendors.
- 164 Faster programs.
- 165 I would like for the curriculum to be more interactive and less redundant.
- 166 Stronger gifted programming
- 167 Easier to use stipend for field trips and classes.
- 168 No state test required
- 169 N/A
- 170 COMMUNICATION, better explanation on the learning fund and so on
- 171 I like the Skype/Hangouts/FaceTime tutoring sessions better for accountability and making the most of the hour they are with the tutor. The current tutoring system takes an hour to do about 20 minutes of actual work.
- 172 As I stated before in previous survey I wish their was an online cirriculum that went along with workbooks. I think this would help with retention !
- 173 Epic Rocks.
- 174 None
- 175 I wish their was a way for the online cirriculum to go with a workbook. I realize it's a virtual school, but I believe they need to be able to write!
- 176 Improved tutoring, improvement in communication from teachers regarding where child is progressing in curriculum
- 177 I would encourage more project-based and team learning opportunities.

178 To have a log in to where parents can log in and check on the status of their kids, Give the parents access to be able to unlock the tests or quizzes in the curriculum because the teacher sometimes takes longer than needs to be. Even if you text, email and email again and you still get nothing and even if you email her thru the Curriculum. I would recommend that the teacher (mine) that she lose the attitude and maybe not have attitude if somebody isn't right on schedule because not everybody is going to work at her schedule. I thought that was the whole purpose of Working at your own speed was that if you work slower it was alright - My teacher tends to make my kids feel like they may as well be back in the public school with the pressure she puts on them. We like her but we will see how next year goes.

179 None. Y'all are great.

180 Less gray areas when giving curriculum options. Every year after starting my oldest or middle child into a set path we are at the last minute (after much time spent on a subject) told they cannot get the appropriate credit or must take additional testing.

181 none

182 More help money wise with extra curricular activities

***Responses from Question #4 option g:**

Other (please specify)

- 1 The atmosphere at the brick and mortar school was not acceptable
- 2 Behavior of students and teachers at the local level. Students unruly, teachers could not gain control of the class in order to teach those that were there to learn.
- 3 My child asked to be removed from the influences of b&m schools.
- 4 I don't agree with Public school agendas
- 5 I wanted a more morally upstanding environment. Public middle is becoming x rated amongst the conversations among boys and girls. Children cannot escape it. Teachers are placing "good" kids next to troubled kids in order to maintain order. Class sizes are too high to maintain a moral and clean environment to learn.
- 6 I wanted a more morally upstanding environment. Public middle is becoming x rated amongst the conversations among boys and girls. Children cannot escape it. Teachers are placing "good" kids next to troubled kids in order to maintain order. Class sizes are too high to maintain a moral and clean environment to learn.
- 7 My child had medical issues that the school could not accommodate
- 8 I have homeschooled for 14 years and was feeling the need for academic support for my kids after I dealt with some extremely challenging life events.
- 9 Unhappy with ridiculous policies of public ed
- 10 was having problems in public schools because of disabilities.
- 11 A friend of mine recommended that it was a very good school program
- 12 We came from Forney Texas where the schools were great, and noticed that family being in the school my child would be attending wasn't very satisfactory. So from my sister in law I heard about Epic Charter looked it up and saw all the great things about it. My child begged me to not send her to the public school here and please put her in this school so I did. I feel this was the best fit for my child..
- 13 Though my child was not participating in drugs, he was being pressured by the high amount of drug use in public schools.
- 14 This school was a good fit for my student.
- 15 Oklahoma schools seem to be inefficient. We moved from California private schools, to Oklahoma public and it's been a major shift for him. Also, I found his previous school to be too difficult to work with. I couldn't sit in traffic for 3 hours every day with my back being the way it is. He wasn't getting

adequate challenges, and getting punished for the crimes of another person. He was getting picked on... the list goes on and on.

16 needs one on one assistance continuously

17 We could no longer afford private school.

18 EPIC was the best option for us this year.

19 This was the best option for this school year.

20 I work nights. Homeschool allows us to be together during the day.

21 My child was homeschooled and decided to go back to a public school, but her credits wouldn't count. She started Epic so she could work at an accelerated pace so she could possibly graduate at a public school.

22 Just wanted to try instead of public schools

23 Learning fund

24 My child(ren) are both special needs. I knew that they would need the help of a Special Education teacher as they advanced.

25 Learning fund

26 seeking better education, less time wasting, safer environment.

27 school she attended was too far away and was costing considerable amount of gas to and from. as a single parent could not afford it

28 Moved to a bigger city

29 Brother is in high school and enrolled in epic so we enrolled both kids

30 suffers from anxiety in crowds

31 As a parent I wanted the extra support and accountability.

32 more structure

33 We felt like homeschool was safer and we could teach her spirituality

34 We are moving to a new town in Oklahoma every year for three years; this gives us some stability

35 Public funding not available through homeschooling and an official diploma

36 Expense or homeschooling

37 NCAA approved classes

38 Prefer schooling at home but like that school is accredited

39 Was being bullied and nothing being done about it did it for his safety

40 For health reasons he missed a lot of school

41 I am stable in our homeschooling but wanted a little extra support, from the teacher and learning fund.

42 Having a wonderful teacher to work with us and the learning fund.

43 The money for curriculum and the free help and tutoring

44 partnering with a teacher helps with my homeschool goals

45 we saw that the schools were getting worse, not better and didn't want our child in that environment

46 I didn't like the influence other children were having on my children

47 Looking at What Is best fit for our needs

48 My child is very shy, and was very stressed each day when she had to go to public school.

49 As a former homeschooler, Mom was ill. Public school schedule didn't work. This worked while Mom recovered

50 She was missing a lot of school due to illness

51 Allows for testing

52 We were ready to slow our pace of life down.

53 Just knowing my child is able to receive adequate help when needed

54 I wanted to homeschool but this provides a teacher and help for me as a parent.

55 My children weren't getting the one on one time as needed.

56 She was getting wrapped up in girl drama

57 ability to customize curriculum

58 To be able to practice faith freely.

59 My child was receiving suboptimal teaching in public school with untrained personnel and inadequate facilities.

60 My child attended private school all her schooling prior to this and while her grades were good, school was extremely stressful for her.

61 He was being exposed to things that I did not agree with from hanging out with the wrong crowd of children such as drugs, fights, bullying and sex.

62 my child was bullied and no seemed to care

63 Access to state testing, curricula, & official public school transcript

64 i believe my child was not receiving adequate academic attention and felt he would excel to his potential with Epic.

65 I don't like public schools

66 Flexibility and being able to go at his own pace

67 Anxiety

68 We moved and this was the only charter school that homeschooled

69 I knew my daughter would need to learn at her own pace after experiencing how her older brother needed it as an accelerated learner.

70 They wanted to hold her back for they felt she wasn't going to pass the OCCT. She was getting made fun of for reading slowly.

71 My son suffers from anxiety and does not do well with big social groups.

72 wanted to save \$ on tuition but didn't want to send to public school

73 Daughter -behavior issues. Son-victim of bullying

74 It's the best fit for our family.

75 Class sizes at public school out of my comfort zone

76 I didn't think he was ready to go to school. I have my other 3 kids at home and didn't feel the need to send my preschool child.

77 Better fits our schedule

78 My daughter wanted to be homeschooled due to the Drama in the school and she was also getting bullied by teachers and students and superintendent and principal was not doing anything.

Appendix C:
Student Survey Results

Student Survey

Surveys Completed: 146

Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Statistical Data

1. What is your current level in this virtual charter school?	
6th grade	11%
7th grade	9%
8th grade	6%
9th grade	19%
10th grade	21%
11th grade	25%
12th grade	9%
2. How long have you attended Epic Virtual Charter School?	
1-2 years	73%
3-4 years	21%
More than 5 years	6%
3. How much time do you spend each day attending virtual classes and/or completing assignments?	
1-3 hours per day	40%
4-6 hours per day	46%
More than 6 hours per day	13%
*Other (See Comments at the end of this Survey)	15 responses

Survey Questions - Set A

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Overall, I feel good about being in this virtual charter school environment.	58%	35%	5%	2%
Teachers engage me in virtual classroom discussions.	26%	44%	26%	4%
I can be creative in classroom assignments and projects.	43%	10%	17%	1%
The rules and policies of this virtual charter school are fair.	48%	49%	2%	1%

Continue to Survey Questions - Set B

Survey Questions - Set B

Which e-learning formats do most of your teacher(s) use and to what degree does he/she use them for instruction?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Face-to-Face	14%	19%	51%	16%
Synchronous (at a specific time each day)	28%	17%	47%	8%
Asynchronous (anytime during the day)	10%	13%	44%	32%
How much do each of the following activities and assignments interest or engage you?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Teacher lectures (through video or other technological means)	10%	28%	50%	12%
Discussions and debates (online interactive formats such as google hangouts)	15%	28%	37%	21%
Individual/independent readings	4%	12%	44%	40%
Writing projects	20%	20%	43%	17%
Research projects	14%	28%	43%	16%
Group projects through online technology.	34%	24%	33%	10%
Giving presentations and speeches (e.g., Skype, webinar, etc.).	50%	19%	22%	10%
Art, drama activities, and role plays	27%	24%	28%	21%
Projects and lessons involving personal device apps or other technology sources.	11%	17%	53%	20%
Memorizing facts and figures for courses	10%	14%	44%	33%
Analyzing ideas during class or for assignments	8%	9%	59%	24%
How much does your school emphasize each of the following?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Spending time preparing for standardized tests	9%	7%	32%	53%
Participating in school events and activities (athletics, plays, academic competitions)	30%	28%	26%	16%
Using technology tools (e.g., Google apps for education, virtual field trips, etc.) for class work.	7%	19%	39%	35%
Furthering education or training beyond high school	16%	11%	35%	38%
How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas?	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Acquiring skills for a job after completing high school.	13%	12%	41%	35%



How much has your experience at this school contributed to your development in the following areas? (cont.)	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Very Much
Writing effectively	7%	14%	43%	37%
Thinking critically (reasoning, asking “Why”)	3%	19%	35%	43%
Developing creative ideas and solutions	5%	12%	46%	37%
Reading and understanding challenging materials	6%	9%	42%	43%
Using technology to gather and communicate information.	4%	8%	38%	50%
Working well with others to complete a task or project.	19%	35%	27%	19%
Developing career goals	14%	14%	40%	33%
Treating people with respect.	6%	7%	28%	59%
Effort in Courses	None	Some	Most	All
About how many of your courses challenge you to your full academic potential?	4%	30%	41%	25%
In about how many courses do you give your maximum effort?	3%	16%	39%	43%
In about how many courses do you put forth very little effort?	53%	34%	8%	5%

Written Responses

What suggestions would you like to offer to improve our school?

Responses

- 1 You should have more class friendly activities like have highschool science class meet ups to do hands on projects for a grade with a teacher and students all together and there should be more in person optional electives like drama class stem programs robotics etc
- 2 More communication
- 3 Good
- 4 More field trips so I can meet and be around other students.
- 5 Have more meet ups for students who struggle with like math and science to talk with people who are understanding the material.
- 6 I like it the way it is now.
- 7 More questions on the quiz in the curriculum.
- 8 I have no suggestions. I like everything the way it is now.
- 9 Print worksheets for students if needed, assign work and have a due date. On the due date meet with students to go over the weeks work and turn in assignments, that way the students will do the work, and be more engaged since they will be meeting with you in person and will stay motivated.
- 10 Add a sports program
- 11 To expand to other states. Being able to travel while doing school would be an amazing opportunity to all.
- 12 more school trips

13 Maybe things on time management for fellow students. I have a friend also doing epic but she is struggling because she came from public school and doesn't know good time management.

14 none

15 Make learning more fun and not all about Reding books and listening to lectures.

16 Using video chats with a teacher. Or something like E2020

17 More help with getting scholarships

18 Tell exactly what notes I should take.

19 nothing i like it

20 Epic is the best school i have been in.

21 Having more help with school work

22 1.More instructional, detailed, and a softer explanation in lessons, most of my time is spent searching the internet for an explanation on how to do something through my classes 2. Use more detailed videos over text to keep the student more interested in finishing and understanding the lesson, more than enough, I am driven to hate reading several pages out of each class just to answer 10 questions. 3. Have a way for students to get into live video calls with teachers of certain subjects, for example, a math teacher, as an explanation from virtual tutoring sometimes is just not enough and takes up too much time for me and other students.

23 Nothing

24 Nothing

25 Use more writing assignments and research projects and less lectures for students like me who are more of a hands on learner.

26 More social activities, music, sports, etc.

27 A little more scheduled guidance from teachers.

28 More social activities.

29 Stop trying to relate it to real world to make it fun.

30 less testing in tulsa

31 I would like to see more offerings for primary grades. Specifically, I would like to see a program that teaches reading in an intentional manner. One that incorporates phonemic awareness and phonics instructions with an emphasis on sight word inclusion.

32 Better internet wifi.

33 I can't really think of anything to improve.

34 .

35 Music/play meeting group weekly. I would also like to see some athletic programs start.

36 This school doesn't need any improvement

37 Fewer tests

38 Sports

39 The spanish teacher tell him he need to lighten up, for example he hurt my feelings by telling me your not going to finish this semester or school year at the pase you are going.I mean he does not know my plans,know whats going on with me and that hurt and then he gives me low grades because i accidentally made a runon sentences and fixed anyway.My point is he keeps telling me I am in the wrong that I need to work harder, I need to know certien things that I put in there already.He needs to get in his mind its the end of the school year and we are trying its already stressful enough with the test we dont need him adding it on...i already have family matters and school matters to deal with and he is makeing it worse, makeing me a nevese wreak (he doesn't understand he is dealing with children)

40 Better curriculum instruction.

41 I can't think of any suggestions.

42 Have sports.

43 I would like more opportunities to interact with my fellow classmates in social and virtual events outside of school.



44 Have more kids in a class. Having more places where kids with the same teacher can meet and get to know each other.

45 I'd like to do PowerPoint presentations more, i enjoy doing those.

46 Getting papers or discussions graded the same week i complete them, I don't like to do papers and discussions unless its on a Monday or Tuesday because sometimes they can't be graded in the same week which could effect if i'm counted truant. I've gotten a Truant warning before because of this.

47 I think that it would be helpful for the school to help students gather information about college.

48 More options for teens with special needs to meet and socialize, field trips, proms, dances- as they do for "normal" kids.

49 None

50 I think it's good the way it is.

51 Make sure your questions aren't too opinionated. It's frustrating to have a question that asks how something makes you feel, then says that you're wrong in how you feel.

52 Make more events where students can meet more students their age.

53 Start STUCO for high school students!

54 Set an area or chat room for kids with the same teacher, to work together on some of the projects.

55 I higher amount in fund each year for supplies and extra curricular classes. Would like better quality laptops

56 field trips, more fun stuff going to learn something at museums. going to meet new people. (i literally don't have any friends) do more fun projects

57 None

58 As an independently-working student it's often difficult to find the motivation to complete all of my work in a given day. If teachers were to monitor how much work each student is getting done each day, with less lenient penalties on skipping classes, it might be the necessary "push" needed for finishing.

59 Give more opportunity to allow the students to express themselves and offer grade courses.

60 I don't know

61 sometimes coomunicating is hard because it takes a few hours for responses

62 Offer more classes, and if we find a curriculum that is accredited, give us the credit for that subject.

63 Make the videos a little more fun

64 None

65 None at this time

66 Everything is great! :)

67 None

68 I would like y'all to begin school earlier so we don't have to rush to finish school when public school ends!!!

69 None

70 Better teachers who can record your grades

71 More opportunities to meet with other students and teachers especially on some subjects like biology/sciences or art projects (photography) in groups. Things like that.

72 More Epic Charter School meet ups. I love the activities.

73 Nothing

74 For students like myself that struggle with math to have it explained in a couple different ways

75 Better Communication

76 better tutoring system

77 None

78 There should be meet ups at more locations. The meet ups should be for specific age groups.

79 Some classes have lessons that has lots of reading and it gets boring. Maybe the lessons can be shorter and to the point quicker.

80 Administration is slow to respond.

What do you like best about your school?

- 1 I like that it's set at my own pace I don't have to stress about deadlines and that they offer us money to do outside of school activities
- 2 The flexibility of my schedule.
- 3 It's great
- 4 Stay home
- 5 I can do my work at my pace.
- 6 I like that how I actually get taught the material and how I can work at my own pace.
- 7 It's flexible, so I don't have to do school everyday. That helps me when I do the schooling twice a week to really understand it more and not have information crammed into my head everyday.
- 8 I can do art classes
- 9 I can work at my one pace .
- 10 Homework help 24/7, taking as much time as you need to learn something.
- 11 Working at my own pace.
- 12 everything
- 13 Work with your schedule. Very nice teachers, very helpful websites.
- 14 Learning on my own, activities
- 15 I can do my work alone and no one bothers me.
- 16 It has developed my character, and lets me do what I want to do on my own schedule while getting the schoolwork done.
- 17 geting of erlyer than raguler schools
- 18 I can do it more to my pace, and I don't have to deal with other people.
- 19 you can finish and do work on your own time , and you can understand your lesson much easier.
- 20 The fact I can complete school work any time and don't have to wake up super early.
- 21 My teacher
- 22 Flexibility
- 23 I can wake up in my pajamas and do my work in bed.
- 24 every thing
- 25 It is hard at first but it gets easier on the way
- 26 Since I'm a teen mom and still in high school it works with my Son's schedule
- 27 The fact that I didn't have to forcibly rush every aspect of everything, but the dull boringness of the classes out weighed that.
- 28 That I don't have to sit in school around people
- 29 That anytime of day I can get help when I need it.
- 30 I can do it whenever I have the time, I have a crazy busy
- 31 Being at home and working at leisure.
- 32 Flexibility
- 33 I can work at my own pace while working alone but I get to work with other students sometimes so I'm not always all alone.
- 34 The availability to go at my pace
- 35 go at your own pace.
- 36 I appreciate the flexibility that Epic offers for its parents and teachers. As a teacher I am encouraged to find ways to meet the needs of every child where they are at. Epic is truly filling a void for many Oklahoma school children and their families.
- 37 Your own pace.
- 38 I can work on school when ever I want to.
- 39 .
- 40 Independent learning
- 41 It makes being a teenager a whole lot easier, and the school is flexible around my time.



- 42 Being able to work at my own pace.
- 43 Flexibility
- 44 I like how easy it is to do my class work and to do it in quiet, I also like the mifi but it keeps messing up turning off by itself.
- 45 Can do it at any time.
- 46 Flexibility in the time schedule.
- 47 I like that I can control the pace in my lessons and going back in the lessons to review until I understand.
- 48 I like how helpful my assigned teacher has been especially with getting me extra work to get ready for my EOI.
- 49 I can not think of one thing I like about this school.
- 50 Epic Charter School allows me more freedom and flexibility in my schedule, and allows me to move at the pace that best suits my learning style.
- 51 Being able to do it whenever. At anytime.
- 52 I had a chance to meet my teacher, and she helped me with a lot of my work.
- 53 The interesting classes and helpful teachers and staff.
- 54 I like that I can pace myself.
- 55 My teacher. I can be done with my work when I'm done. I can be fast or slow about doing my work.
- 56 The flexibility, learning to be independent because of accountability.
- 57 Don't really have a schedule
- 58 I can work on my time.
- 59 I don't have a set schedule, so I can make room for life problems.
- 60 Being able to work ahead
- 61 Flexibility
- 62 I like how epic can accommodate any learning style.
- 63 Not having to worry about people copying me or criticizing me.
- 64 Flexible schedule
- 65 home work help and how you don't have a certain time you have to do your work. or how nothing is timed
- 66 Flexibility
- 67 Working at my own pace.
- 68 Being home. Other than that this program I did was not very great .
- 69 My teacher
- 70 Flexible schedule, less stress than regular school
- 71 my elective classes
- 72 The ability to work at my own pace, set my own goals, and flourish.
- 73 The videos help sometimes and my teachers are really nice
- 74 I can do it on my own time.
- 75 That it gives me the time I need to do things throughout the day. The teacher Especially ?? is amazing!!
- 76 What I like about epic charter schools is I get to work on my own pace, & get to focus on what needs to be done.
- 77 Being online
- 78 I get to do my work whenever I want
- 79 I don't know
- 80 I like all the choices of subjects to choose from and the extra curricular fun things.
- 81 I love my teacher. She rocks.
- 82 Working on my own
- 83 I can do it whatever time of day and start school breaks early and summer.
- 84 How we don't have to be so rushed. We don't have to stress

- 85 It's work at your own pace
- 86 not being a victim of bullying
- 87 That it allows me to get out and work more around my school schedule
- 88 I like that I am able to work at my own pace. I also like that I have a lot of time to spend with my family.
- 89 Odysseyware is easy to navigate. My one on one teacher is wonderful.
- 90 It allows my kid's to work at there own pace

What do you like least about your virtual charter school?

Responses

- 1 I the the compass program sometimes it's hard to understand and I don't feel like I'm learning anything I feel like I'm my own teacher and it's a little stressful
- 2 The number of MAP tests we have to do.
- 3 Not much communication
- 4 Teacher
- 5 Not being around other kids.
- 6 I don't like the homework help. I tried using it and got super confused. There was no explanation on how to use it or what I was doing.
- 7 Some of the classes are more difficult than public school classes
- 8 No sports .
- 9 Compass learning, it's pretty hard.
- 10 Problems with Internet connection and slow Mifi causing lag in videos and computer work.
- 11 Nothing on my part
- 12 Work
- 13 They do not have sports.
- 14 How it is not available in other states.
- 15 hardly anny fild trips
- 16 It's hard to meet other students, it can seem like an overwhelming amount of work at times. And sometimes my assignments don't get graded/I don't get emailed back fast.
- 17 how many assignments you actually have to complete in the given amount of time .
- 18 Required Chats
- 19 Some of my classes
- 20 I need more guidance for after school
- 21 nothing i like it all
- 22 Nothing
- 23 How tedious everything is, and I mean everything, as in, If im struggling with math, I wont be getting instant easy help
- 24 I love it Lel
- 25 Nothing
- 26 The lack of hands on learning.
- 27 Too much online computer and work, not enough book reading and classical education.
- 28 Not enough social opportunities.
- 29 Not seeing my friends on a daily basis.
- 30 Lack of personal one on one teaching
- 31 constant with map testingand then havnig to do tutoring
- 32
- 33 nothing.
- 34 I can't say that there is anything to improve on!



- 35 .
36 Isolation from other students all of the time. Some interaction would be nice.
37 The end of the year EOIs
38 How many times you have to take the same tests
39 No sports
40 That there was hardly a notice for the EOI's and i didn't get to study for like any of them and it got really stressful and confusing at that time.
41 How dry the material is sometimes
42 I don't dislike anything.
43 I don't have any complaints with my virtual high school.
44 They are extremely unorganized, slow to respond and rude.
45 My least favorite aspect would be the lack of social events with other students outside of school.
46 Sometimes I needed a book and wasn't able to access a place to get it.
47 The work load was a my least favorite thing.
48 The pressure it puts on a student the entire week to make sure they get 5 assignments and more complete.
49 I do not like that we have to take so many EOI's.
50 Lack of Christmas break
51 There are no ways to meet teens like myself , I have autism and learning disabilities. Would like to meet other teens with special needs. Miss socializing.
52 Hard to understand some concepts
53 Nothing.
54 I sometimes get weird questions on tests that don't seem like they have a right answer, or have more than one. Mostly in English
55 Not many ways to meet other students my own age.
56 Can't do sports.
57 I would like epic to give students more leadership opportunities (STUCO).
58 Not many chances to make friends that are part of Epic.
59 Odyssey program
60 not getting to do fun things like field trips. you'll should have like all the 9th graders meet somewhere in Tulsa or sum and we all go on a field trip or something and do more projects
61 Study island
62 Flipping through power point slides gets mundane.
63 The program. I had no challenges and it really made me feel like I wasn't having to work hard.
64 The school work. But Evey teenager don't like school work.
65 just the emailing communication taking longer
66 The small amount of resources for students wanting to expand their academic horizons
67 Some of the videos
68 Harder than public school
69 None at this time
70 Nothing really
71 The time
72 We have to rush to finish school they don't prepare us for the test way ahead .
73 Nothing
74 I don't like all the testing.
75 Testing
76 My teacher
77 the tst tests that we have to do in Apex.
78 I have to retake quizzes if I fail
79 Lack of other people

80 There is very little socializing

Comments from Question #3

- 1 Some days 6 hours and some days 3 hours
- 2 It usually depends, if I work a lot one day then I won't work as much the next day.
- 3 My hours vary depending on the day
- 4 I am a teacher with Epic Charter Schools. I work with students during regularly scheduled appointments Monday through Friday and via phone, text, email, etc. as needed by the student and their family.
- 5 1-4 hours a day
- 6 Mostly 4-5 hours but sometimes more than 6 hours
- 7 It varies depending on my attention span.
- 8 Varies
- 9 1-3 because i work
- 10 Just depends on the day
- 11 i do all my assignments for the week on one day.
- 12 Some days are more but I have my daughter to take care of as well
- 13 this varied per assignments
- 14 I do my work 1 day a week but spend up to 10 hours doing it.
- 15 Sometimes more, sometimes less.



Appendix D:

Resources Referenced In Chapter 2

PLC Meeting Agenda (Elementary)

Teacher: _____ Team _____ Date: ___/___/___

SELECT & STUDY THE STANDARDS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Review the pacing calendar. What objectives have been assigned for the upcoming week?
2. Read the item specifications of the objectives you are going to teach next week. Consider the following:
 - a. The **Emphasis** of the objective?
 - b. The **Stimulus Attributes** of the objective?
 - c. The **Content Limits** of the objective?
 - d. What is the **Format** that will be used? and
 - e. What are the **Distractor Domains** of the objective(s)?
3. What **depth of knowledge** (DoK) will be used when teaching/assessing each objective?
4. What **vocabulary** will need to be addressed?
5. Using the **Blue Prints**, how many questions will be on the test that corresponds to each objective?

PREPARING FOR MATH LESSON(S)

Standard:	Blue Print # of ?	Content Vocabulary	DoK Level:
Obj.			
Obj.			
Obj.			

PREPARING FOR READING LESSON(S)

Standard:	Blue Print # of ?	Content Vocabulary	DoK Level:
Obj.			
Obj.			
Obj.			

PREPARING FOR SOCIAL STUDIES/ SCIENCE LESSON(S)

Standard:	Blue Print # of ?	Content Vocabulary	DoK Level:
Obj.			
Obj.			
Obj.			

PLC Meeting Agenda (Elementary)

PLC Meeting Agenda (Elementary)

PREPARE & PLAN TO TEACH THE OBJECTIVE(S)

PREPARE

Prompts for team discussions

1. How to establish and relate the objective to the learners? What background knowledge will be needed?
2. In order to involve all learners, what methods will I use to explain/model the content and at what level (Depth of Knowledge -Webb) (Blooms – remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating) will I present the content? What questioning techniques will I incorporate into the presentation?
3. What modeling actions should be considered when delivering the directions during the lesson sequence? How will I activate student's prior background knowledge throughout the lesson?
4. During guided practice and independent practice I will incorporate literacy by using the following domains: Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking.
5. While monitoring students during the learning process, I will adjust the instructional environment by using the following differentiated approaches: independent study, small group, peer tutoring, other?
6. Evaluate the learning: What assessment(s) will be used? Review the released test items.

PLAN

(Teachers will write/revise their upcoming lesson plans during this session)

1. If choosing the BDLC Lesson Plan (LP) Template - planning can be accomplished using the electronic version or the paper format.
2. Find the standard and objective(s) that will be taught for this unit/week (see Phase II for selected standard and objective(s)).
3. Using the pacing calendar – Determine which quarter the standard/objective will be Introduced / T2M/Assessed. Circle the quarter the LP is to be taught.
4. Note which weeks are assigned to the standard/objective and circle the planned week.
5. Insert the resources to be used for the Activities (e.g. Text, Page#, technology support) Assessment Sources (e.g. Formative/Summative)
6. Decide if the Actions for the lesson will be categorized as: I = Introductory to the standard/objective T2M = Teach toward mastery of the selected objective (i.e. as demonstrated on a formative assessment); Write the activities for achieving that goal.
7. Provide how you will check for learning of standard/objective(s) using one or more Formative assessments.

PLC Meeting Agenda (Elementary)

DATA ANALYSIS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

1. Prior to the team PLC Meeting complete this section:
 - a. Using the ***Monitoring Student Learning Graph*** review the objectives that were taught the previous week. On the table below record the following:
 - i. What objectives did you teach?
 - ii. How many scored **Proficient? Advanced?**

Math			Reading			Writing/Soc. St./Science		
Objectives #	# Advanced	# Proficient	Objectives #	# Advanced	# Proficient	Objectives #	# Advanced	# Proficient

2. List the students that scored in each category (**Limited Knowledge/ Unsatisfactory**) and select type of focus group – if applicable (SPED/ELL). Also record attendance data (ADA) for the previous week/month.

FORMATIVE DATA FOR MATH

Obj #	Limited Knowledge	ADA	SPED	ELL	Unsatisfactory	ADA	SPED	ELL

FORMATIVE DATA FOR READING

Obj #	Limited Knowledge	ADA	SPED	ELL	Unsatisfactory	ADA	SPED	ELL

FORMATIVE DATA FOR SOCIAL STUDIES/SCIENCE

Obj #	Limited Knowledge	ADA	SPED	ELL	Unsatisfactory	ADA	SPED	ELL

PLC Meeting Agenda (Elementary)

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

Processes for Interventions: *This phase requires the specialist (Special Education teacher/ Reading Specialist/ or assigned tutor) to be part of the discourse.*

- Review the list of students scoring Limited Knowledge and Unsatisfactory on the above chart and determine if they can be moved forward using strategies within the classroom (Tier One). Those students needing more intervention should move into a Tier Two approach (Use Small Group Worksheet). Students who still struggle with the objectives after Tier Two approach then move forward to Tier Three (Use Individual Worksheet). Flex grouping should be at the center of the Tier two interventions.
- Review the number of students remediated last 2 weeks and the grade they received after receiving remediation (both Tiers Worksheets). Review strategies to be used or have been used in remediation (see Worksheets). Are specific strategies working better than others? What may not be working as well?
- Compare the students not mastering to their scores from last years' OCCT or previous district Benchmarks. What is their percentage of growth? (Review Class Proficiency Data Focus Sheet)
- Review students' behavior records for the past month. If there is two or more referrals then complete the information below:

Student	Description of Incident	Date	Time	Additional Comments

SAMPLE PACING CALENDAR – PHASE I

FIFTH GRADE ELA

PASS STRANDS RL= Reading/Literature W= Writing V= Visual Literacy OLLS= Oral Language/Listening/Speaking			DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE Level 1= Recall/Reproduction Level 2= Skills/Concepts Level 3= Strategic Thinking			QUARTER MARKS I= Introduce T2M=Teach2Mastery A= Assess				
STRAND	STANDARD #	<u>STANDARDS & OBJECTIVES</u> PASS OBJ = 10 pt. font if tested/ <i>italicized</i> 9pt. if not tested	TEST BLUE PRINT		Depth of Knowledge		Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four
			# items	% of test	# of L1	# of L2				
RL		Reading/Literature: The student will apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, appreciate, and respond to a variety of texts.								
RL	1	Standard 1: Vocabulary - The student will develop and expand knowledge of words and word meanings to increase their vocabulary.	12	24%	3	8	1			
RL	1.1.a	Words in Context: Use knowledge of word parts and word relationships, as well as context clues (the meaning of the text around a word), to determine the meaning of specialized vocabulary and to understand the precise meaning of grade-level-appropriate words.	4				I/T2M/A			
RL	1.1.b	Words in Context: Use prior experience and context to understand and explain the figurative use of words such as similes (comparisons that use like or as: His feet were as big as boats), and metaphors (implied comparisons: The giants steps were thunderous).					I/T2M/A			
RL	1.2.a	Affixes, Roots, and Stems: Interpret new words by analyzing the meaning of prefixes and suffixes.	4				I/T2M/	A		
RL	1.2.b	Affixes, Roots, and Stems: Apply knowledge of root words to determine the meaning of unknown words within a passage.					I/T2M	A		
RL	1.2.c	Affixes, Roots, and Stems: Use word origins, including knowledge of less common roots (graph = writing, terras = earth) and word parts (hemi = half, bio = life) from Greek and Latin to analyze the meaning of complex words (terrain, hemisphere, biography).					I/T2M	A		
RL	1.3	Synonyms, Antonyms, and Homonyms/Homophones - Apply knowledge of fifth grade level synonyms, antonyms, homonym/homophones, and multiple meaning words to determine the meaning of words and phrases.	4				I/T2M	A		

SAMPLE PACING CALENDAR – PHASE I

FIFTH GRADE ELA

STRAND	STANDARD #	STANDARDS & OBJECTIVES <i>PASS OBJ = 10 pt. font if tested/ <i>italicized</i> 9pt. if not tested</i>	TEST BLUE PRINT		Depth of Knowledge			Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four
			# items	% of test	# of L1	# of L2	# of L3				
RL	1	Standard 1: Vocabulary - The student will develop and expand knowledge of words and word meanings to increase their vocabulary. (Continued)	12	24%	3	8	1				
RL	1.4.a	*Using Resource Materials and Aids: Use a thesaurus to determine related words and concepts.									
RL	1.4.b	*Using Resource Materials and Aids: Determine the meanings, pronunciation, and derivations of unknown words by using a glossary and/or dictionary.									
RL	2	<i>Standard 2: Fluency</i> - The student will identify words rapidly so that attention is directed at the meaning of the text.									
RL	2.1-2.4	<i>Read regularly both independently and instructionally while increasing fluency and speed. Teacher monitors progress.</i>									
RL	3	Standard 3: Comprehension/Critical Literacy - The student will interact with the words and concepts in the text to construct an appropriate meaning.	20	40%	5	13	2				
RL	3.1.a	Literal Understanding: Use pre-reading strategies independently (to preview, activate prior knowledge, predict content of text, formulate questions that might be answered by the text, and establish purpose for reading).						I/T2M/A			
RL	3.1.b	Literal Understanding: Read and comprehend both fiction and nonfiction that is appropriately designed for fifth grade.						I/T2M/A			
RL	3.1.c	Literal Understanding: Recognize main ideas presented in a particular segment of text; identify evidence that supports those ideas.						I/T2M/A			
RL	3.1.d	Literal Understanding: Use the text's structure or progression of ideas such as cause and effect or chronology to organize or recall information.						I/T2M/A			
RL	3.2.a	Inferences and Interpretation: Apply prior knowledge and experience to make inferences and respond to new information presented in text.						I/T2M/A			
RL	3.2.b	Inferences and Interpretation: Draw inferences and conclusions about text						I/T2M/A			

Office of Educational Quality & Accountability

840 Research Parkway, Suite 455
Oklahoma City, OK 73104
Tel: (405) 522-5399
www.oeqa.ok.gov

