



CHARTER SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

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ESEA FLEXIBILITY WAIVER PARENT NOTIFICATION – FOCUS SCHOOL DESIGNATION

11-14-14

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

On August 20, 2013, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) received waivers from ten requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001. The state's ultimate goal is to ensure that all students graduate college- and career-ready through the professional practice of effective teachers and leaders. ESEA/NCLB requires that parents or guardians who have children attending a Title I school be notified of the school's academic achievement as well as the school's designation under Pennsylvania's ESEA Flexibility Waiver. This letter is intended to provide additional information concerning the options available to your child under Pennsylvania's ESEA Flexibility Waiver and to help you understand what the waiver will mean for you and your child.

Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, PDE will transition from using Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to determine a school's designation, to using four Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) to designate the Title I school as Reward – High Achievement, Reward – High Progress, Priority, or Focus schools. The four AMOs include measuring Test Participation Rate; Graduation/Attendance Rate; Closing the Achievement Gap for All Students and Closing the Achievement Gap for the Historically Underperforming Students. In addition, all public schools in the state will receive a School Performance Profile (SPP) score based on 100 points. This score will be considered the school's academic performance score, and while not the criteria for determination of Reward, Priority or Focus status, it details student performance through scoring of multiple measures that define achievement. The School Performance Profile also includes supports to permits schools to access materials and resources to improve in defined areas related to achievement.

Despite the progress made by our students, Charter School of Excellence (CSE) has been designated as a Focus School under Pennsylvania's ESEA Flexibility Waiver for the 2014-2015 year. This designation was based on 2012/2013 test data and our school will keep this designation for three years.

Focus Schools are 10 percent of the lowest Title I schools based on the highest achievement gap for the Historically Low Performing students' AMO. The aggregate achievement gap is determined by the combined Mathematics/Reading PSSA scores and/or the Algebra 1/Literature

Keystone Exam scores. They can also be Title I high school with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years; or have a test participation rate below 95 percent and are not identified as a Priority School.

CSE continues to offer dynamic programming and is moving our students forward academically. The mission of CSE is, “The mission of the Perseus House Charter School of Excellence is to provide a variety of educational opportunities to foster academic excellence through partnerships with families, community, and school. We provide programs and services to facilitate intellectual growth and enable students to become independent, responsible, and employable citizens.” We are meeting this mission, and continue to work with students who are experiencing difficulties academically and or socially, who were not satisfied with the larger school settings from traditional educational systems. However, our state scores are below what the state expects in school wide scores. The following is a recap of our School Performance Profile:

- Overall score 40.9
- Core content raw scores are below the state requirements
- Graduation rates are below the state requirements.
- Attendance is within the state requirements
- Test participation is within the state requirements.

CSE was chartered by the Erie City School District at their request to provide educational services to students who may be at risk of academic failure. Our students are not failures, however, some of them come to us with many diverse issues. Here are some examples:

Before entering our district, many of our students enrolled having performed below grade level. 1/3 of our high school Keystone test takers are English Language Learners (ELL) and are not yet proficient in the English language. Keystone exams are all given in English. Ironically, the same students show growth in the Access Test; a test that is designed for ELL's. The same students are earning credit in dual enrollment courses with local colleges that include, Edinboro and Gannon Universities.

A large number of high school students enter our system below grade level in all content areas. The task of moving students to proficiency on the Keystone exams in a short period of time is a complex endeavor. That said, the same students are achieving credits, improving their reading levels, and are finding success in higher education and in the community through our work force program.

CSE understands that not all students learn at the same pace and many may need more than 4 years to graduate. There are several reasons why students take 4.5 or 5 years to graduate and our philosophy have always been and remains to be, that we want students to have a sound understanding of content before we consider them graduated.

We believe that there is definitely room for improvement and CSE accepts that responsibility. Our collaborations with the Erie School District, Intermediate Unit, Edinboro University, Gannon University, and Mercyhurst University, as well as local businesses, local organizations, and the parents in our community have provided a laser like focus toward meeting our mission.

CSE has embraced blended technology, and has designed classrooms to meet student needs and offer a pacing structure that keeps students focused and on track. All of the CSE locations use evidence based reading programs, academic designs, and social skills trainings. The middle school students are receiving double classroom time in specific content areas to remediate academic delays they may have experienced prior to their enrollment with us. More than 50 students are involved in community based work programs teaching them employability skills while earning a paycheck as well as school credit through the workforce program. Likewise, more than 40 students are earning academic credit in local universities via dual enrollment opportunities. We will continue to provide the supports needed to move our students forward, toward success within our system and in their post-secondary endeavors.

An important part of the success plan for CSE is parent participation and support in developing activities to improve student achievement. We hope that as a parent/guardian, you will become involved in our school improvement initiatives as we continue to monitor student achievement and set high expectations. If you are interested in participating in developing our school improvement initiatives, contact Amanda Hanas, Executive Administrative Assistant at 480-5954 or ahanas@phcse.org. Should you want more information regarding our SPP scores, please contact me directly.

Thank you for all that you do to support your child's education.

Respectfully,

Dr. Nick Viglione
CEO