

# JOURNEYS IN ELD

AT THE CHARTER SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Spring 2026



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## HELLO FROM MR. FORTIN

Welcome!, Hello!, Hi!, Hallo! Greetings!

As we journey through the final stretch of the 2025-2026 school year, it's incredible to see how far we've come. With the calendar turning quickly, I want to take a moment to celebrate our progress and share a few key highlights from across the Charter School of Excellence ...

- March 26th...End of the Third Quarter
- March 27th...Early Dismissal
- March 30th - April 3rd...Spring/Easter Break
- April 17th ... Early Dismissal
- April 20th-May 1st...PSSA Middle School
- May 1st...Early Dismissal and CSE Prom
- May 11th-22nd ...Spring Keystones High Schools
- May 25th...Memorial Day
- June 4th ... CSE graduation
- June 5th...Last day of school



*Mr. Fortin*

Parents are reminded that if you have any questions or concerns with your student's/ students' education here at the Charter School of Excellence, please feel free to contact me, Christopher Fortin, (814) 480-5908.

## WHAT IS MEMORIAL DAY?

Memorial Day is observed on the last Monday in May (Monday, May 25, 2026). It is a U.S. federal holiday dedicated to honoring and mourning military personnel who died in service.

Formerly known as Decoration Day, it originated after the Civil War to decorate graves with flowers and flags. There are often times parades and/or memorial services recognizing our military personnel.





## DISCOVERY CENTER STUDENTS CELEBRATE RAMADAN

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, is one of the most sacred times for Muslims. It is the month in which it is believed that the Holy Qur'an was sent down from heaven "as a guidance for men and women, a declaration of direction, and a means of salvation."

During this month, Muslims observe a strict fast from dawn until sunset. They do not eat or drink (even water) during daylight hours. Fasting is a private act of worship bringing about nearness to God, as well as a form of spiritual discipline and a means to empathize with those less fortunate.

The fast is broken at the end of the day with prayer and a festive meal called an iftar. It is customary to visit family and friends following the iftar.

During Ramadan, many Muslims go to the mosque and spend several hours praying. In addition to the five daily prayers that are part of the core of Islam, Muslims recite a special prayer called the Tahajjud prayer (night prayer).

On the evening of the 27th day of Ramadan, Muslims observe a special night called Laylat al-Qadr, sometimes referred to as the Night of Power. It is believed that Muhammad first received the Holy Qur'an on this night. At the end of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr celebrates the breaking of the fast. Friends and families gather for festive meals and exchange gifts. Special gifts are also given to the poor.





# CHARTER SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE | DISCOVERY CENTER

## EAGLE STATUS

Eagle Status is the highest recognition given to a student exemplifying ideal behavior and maintaining academic excellence.

All students have an opportunity to achieve Eagle Status.



## ONE SCHOOL, MANY VOICES

The Discovery Center celebrates the historical and current contributions of our highly diverse school environment. Our philosophy and practice is simple: We honor your voice.

By deliberating and purposefully creating a school culture that celebrate's each and every student, Discovery Center aims to help ensure ALL student's success.



American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.2%
Asian	7.7%
Black	39.2%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.0%
Hispanic	21.7%
White	25.2%
2 or More Races	6.1%



## WIDA ACCESS TESTING

WIDA ACCESS Testing is an assessment used to measure the English language levels of students who are English Language Learners (ELLs). The test evaluates a student's abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing among different subject areas. Each year, our ELL students complete the testing in January. The scores are released towards the end of the school year. These scores help to identify what level a student should be placed in for English Language Development classes here at the Charter School of Excellence.

We have finished all testing for this school year and are looking forward to the release of our new scores. Below are the students who increased their overall score from the school year 2022-23 to 2023-24 school years. As soon as the new scores are released, the students will receive a letter to take home about their scores.

### Increase in WIDA Scores for the 2024-25 School Year

#### 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

Omran Wadi

#### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

Isabella Becerra

Fatema Hamad

Lizbeth Nowell

#### 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Abdulmalek Altahlah

Ediel Alvarez Florenciani

Astrid Ortiz Chuta

Somar Ramos Ortega

Edwin Ruch Samayoa

#### 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

Amwag Al hameedi

Mohammad Aloush

Alaa Altadmuri

Aland Hasan

Minha Lal

#### 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

Armen Aghajanov

Amena Alhelol

Sheila Alvarez Barerra

Hussein Awan

Hamzah Basbous

Yedriel Gomez Martinez

Riana Moshkivska

Sharon Perez

Anupa Rai

Ayup Rai

#### 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

Saurb Chhetri

Luis Gell

Blind Hasan

Hanen Hendawy

Maes Hendawy

Irlanda Ruch Samayoa

#### 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

Fatema Al Baradan

Ahmad Al Jallad

Rahaf Al Tahlah

Xzavier Alameda

Othman Albalkhi

Dennzel Serrano Ruiz

Cristian Vazquez Cruzado

## LiveSchool Leaders at the Leadership Center Visit the Greater Cleveland Aquarium

Recently, a group of our students visited the Greater Cleveland Aquarium to celebrate their status as the Leadership Center's LiveSchool Leaders for the 1st semester. The students display the characteristics of our SOAR Pillars on a daily basis and are standouts in the classroom. The Four Pillars of SOAR are Self Management, Growth Mindset, Self Efficacy, and Grit. Our teachers use the LiveSchool platform to award points to students as they display the SOAR Pillars in the classroom. The Greater Cleveland Aquarium trip was well received by the students. If they were brave enough, students were able to touch stingrays in the pool. Students could also feed the stingrays. Another highlight was watching scuba divers interact with sharks under water. Our LiveSchool Committee at the Leadership Center is currently planning another LiveSchool field trip for the 2nd Semester.





## SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS

My name is Fatema Al-Baradan. I was born to loving parents, Ahmad and Maysoun Hreithin. I have 3 brothers and 3 sisters. I was born on February 26, 2008, in Daraa, Syria. My family moved to America in 2016 when I was 8 years old.

My name, Fatema, is Arabic. It means a woman who abstains from bad things. I was named after my grandfather. I would describe my personality as kind, quiet, and caring. I am sometimes shy, but I am friendly once I feel comfortable. I like helping others. I try to stay positive even when things are hard, I would compare myself to a "light" because I try to stay positive even in difficult times.

The story of my arrival here is important because my family moved to this place to have a better and safer future. We left our home because of the war in Syria, and my parents wanted us to grow up in a safe environment with better education and opportunities. Moving to a new country was not easy at first.

My family is special to me because they always support me and care about me. They encourage me to do my best in school and in life. I look like my mother because we have similar facial features, such as our eyes and smiles.

My best friends are people I trust and feel comfortable with. They support me and make me feel special. I hope to see them soon and spend more time together.

My first memory was when I got a cat. I got my cat when I was younger when we came to the United States. A memorable event in my life was when my dad came home from Syria during the war. It was difficult when he was not home. After he returned safely, he planned for our family to move so we could have a better and safer future.

I enjoy simple activities like spending time with my family, listening to music, and relaxing. These activities help me feel calm and happy.

I have attended the Charter School of Excellence since 9th grade. After graduation, I plan to go to college to become a nurse.



Fatema Al-Baradan

My name is Othman Albalkhi. I was born to Mustafa Albalkhi and Faiza Salim. I have 1 sister named Rimas. I was born on June 18, 2008, in Daraa, which is a city in Syria. My name, Othman, is an Arabic name and means bastard (which is a bird), young snake, or young dragon. The name signifies strength and wisdom. I was named after my grandfather. I'm a quiet person, because when I was a kid, I used to be more than 300 pounds, and everybody used to make fun of me. I used to stay by myself and that's why I don't talk to a lot of people. I lived in Syria and we had a war. My family and I went to Jordan to get away from the danger. In 2015, the immigration office asked us if we wanted to go to America. My family decided that it would be better and we moved to the United States in 2020. My parents wanted my sister and I to have a better life and a better education.

My family is special to me because they have tried their best to make my sister and I happy. They worked hard to get us nice things. We didn't have a lot of money when we lived in Syria because of the war. When we moved to the United States, they tried their best to make things better for us. They also try hard to help us fit into American culture and not feel different from other children.

I am more like my mom because she is a quiet person too. We also look like each other. I would have to say that I am a motivated person. I want to be successful in my life and reach my goals. I also like to depend on myself. I don't like to ask my family for a lot of things. They have helped me so much already.

My first memory was when my dad bought me a bike. It was a black cobra bike. I was the first one among my friends to get a bike. It was the best thing that happened to me at that time. Another memorable event that happened in my life was when my dad came back home after being in the hospital for 2 months. He was very ill. I was very glad when he came home and everything was better.

I have attended the Charter School of Excellence for 4 years. My goals in life are to become a doctor. I want to become a great doctor and make my family proud.

I plan to attend Gannon University in the fall. Once I become a doctor, I want to be able to help my parents retire. I live by the quote by Banksy, "If you get tired, learn to rest, not to quit." I know that the road is going to be tough, but I do not want to quit so that I can reach my goals.



Othman Albalkhi



## STATE ASSESSMENT REMINDERS

With the upcoming Pennsylvania State Assessments quickly approaching, PSSA at middle school, Discovery Center and Keystones at high school, Skills Center and Leadership Center, there are some helpful tips for parents to help your student/s perform the best possible.

- Be sure that your student/s get a good night sleep each night during the testing window
- Be sure that your student/s eat a good breakfast
- Remind your student/s not to leave any questions blank
- Remind your student/s to read directions and questions carefully
- Remind your student/s to check their work
- Remind your student/s to pace themselves
- Remind your student/s to do the best that they can as they got this!
- Remind your student/s not to stress and just do their best.



## SPRING TIPS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Spring mental health focuses on renewal, utilizing increased daylight to boost mood through outdoor activity, socializing, and cleaning, which reduces stress.

Key tips include:

- **Outdoor and Physical Activity**
  - Get outside and take in some sunlight
- **Mental and Emotional Refresh**
  - Declutter your space
  - Practice gratitude
  - Think positive
  - Limit social media
- **Self-Care and Social Connection**
  - Reconnect with family and friends
  - Establish spring cleaning routines
- **Hydrate**



## COMMENTS, FEEDBACK, SUGGESTIONS?

Contact Jenifer Dildine at 814-651-9082 or email at [jdildine@phcse.org](mailto:jdildine@phcse.org).