



2014 - 2017 STRATEGIC PLAN



Environmental Charter Schools



THE DEEPER THE ROOTS, THE HIGHER THE REACH

After a period of rapid growth, ECS is taking a pause to strengthen our organizational capacity, master our best practices, and create a sustainable culture and infrastructure to drive our vision forward in the long term. Inspired by our high school's success, in 2010 ECS expanded, opening two middle schools in three years. Over the next few years we plan to reinforce our foundations, building our capacity to expand while maintaining our high quality educational program and extraordinary school culture.

By 2017 we will be positioned to expand our reach and capitalize on a range of opportunities that will allow us to maximize our impact. Considerations for growth include opening an elementary school, adding middle and/or high schools, and/or expanding our Green Ambassadors teacher training program.





OUR SCHOOLS

Environmental Charter Schools is a growing network of free public schools in South Los Angeles that prepares college-bound leaders who care about their communities.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to create and deliver vibrant, innovative, interdisciplinary learning opportunities using the environment to engage students and connect them to the wider world.

OUR VISION

Our vision is that our students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to graduate from college, inspired to discover their own sense of purpose and empowered to become quality stewards of their communities.

ECS VALUES

FAMILY

We care
We communicate
We collaborate
We share
We are partners

CURIOSITY

We question
We explore
We innovate
We imagine
We are solutionaries

SUSTAINABILITY

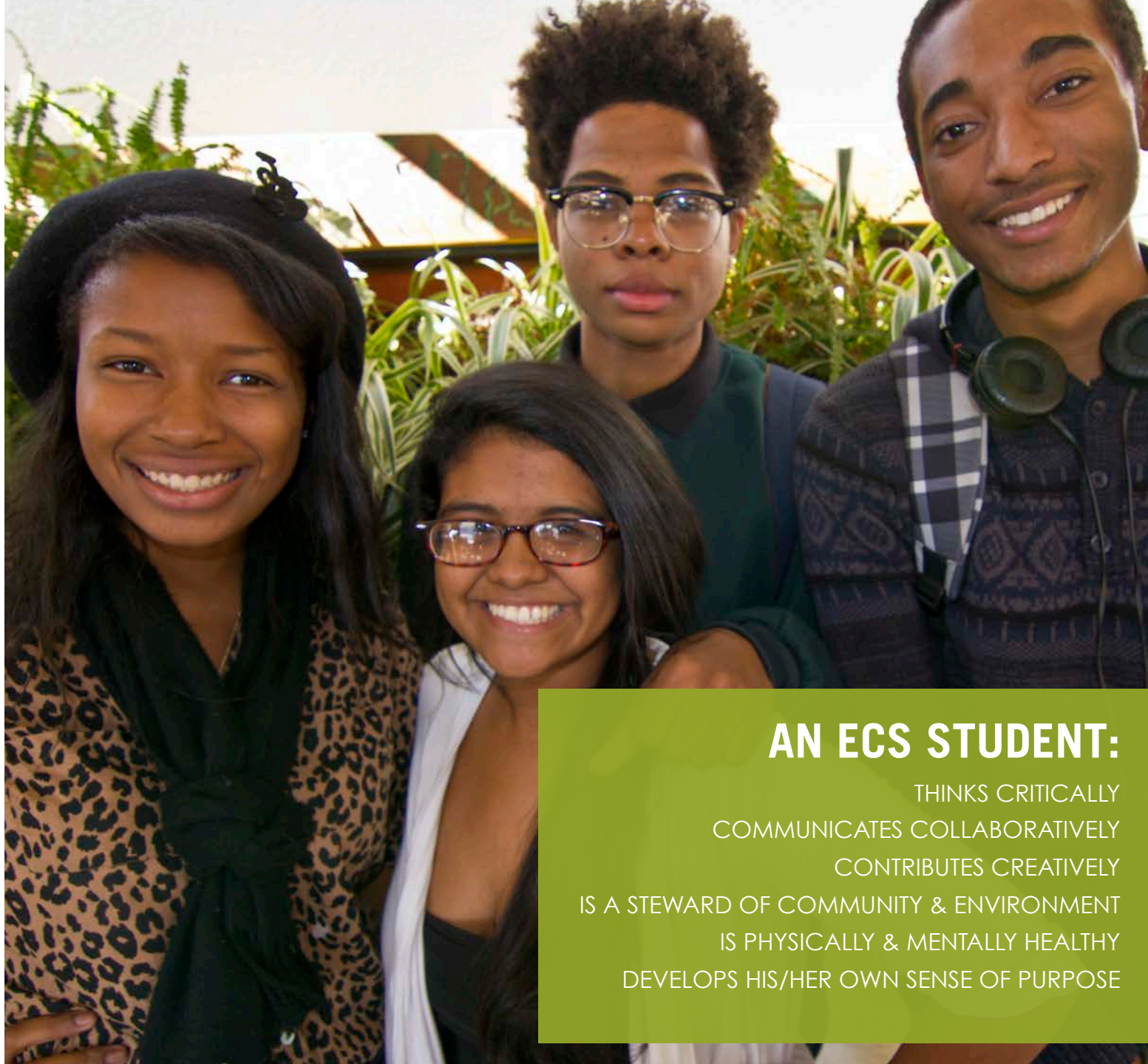
We grow
We adapt
We thrive
We re-think
We engineer progress

ACCOMPLISHMENT

We learn
We focus
We excel
We shine
We get our hands dirty

LEADERSHIP

We chose
We think critically
We advocate
We empower
We are our own
SUPERHEROS



AN ECS STUDENT:

THINKS CRITICALLY
COMMUNICATES COLLABORATIVELY
CONTRIBUTES CREATIVELY
IS A STEWARD OF COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT
IS PHYSICALLY & MENTALLY HEALTHY
DEVELOPS HIS/HER OWN SENSE OF PURPOSE



JUST STEPS FROM THE BUSIEST FREEWAYS

OUR CAMPUSES ARE ALIVE

With more than 100 varieties of fruits and vegetables, a living stream, school wide composting, and solar-powered greenhouses, campus-wide solutions to current challenges offer students and teachers real world examples.

ECHS

ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER
HIGH SCHOOL
16315 Grevillea Ave
Lawndale, CA 90260

ECMS-I

ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER
MIDDLE SCHOOL - INGLEWOOD
3600 W. Imperial Hwy
Inglewood, CA 90303

ECMS-G

ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER
MIDDLE SCHOOL - GARDENA
812 W. 165th Place
Los Angeles, CA 90247





BEST PRACTICES

INTERDISCIPLINARY
CURRICULUM & AUTHENTIC
ASSESSMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL & PROJECT-
BASED LEARNING

RELEVANT AND ENGAGING
INSTRUCTION

SMALL LEARNING
COMMUNITIES

COLLABORATION WITH
PARTNERS

A group of five diverse young adults are captured in a joyful moment, jumping over a low stone wall in a park-like setting. From left to right: a young man in a teal polo shirt and khaki shorts, a young woman in a white polo shirt and khaki pants, a young woman in a dark blue polo shirt and khaki pants, a young woman in a white polo shirt and black pants, and a young woman in a white polo shirt, a purple blazer, and black pants. They are all smiling and holding hands, with their bodies in mid-air as they clear the wall. The background features lush green trees and a clear sky. A semi-transparent blue banner with the text "BEST PRACTICES IN ACTION" is overlaid across the middle of the image.

BEST PRACTICES IN ACTION



INTERDISCIPLINARY CURRICULUM & AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

9th graders present their sustainable campus design to a panel of experts. Students apply their understanding of standards from all disciplines, engaging with content in a deeper, rigorous and more meaningful way.

ENVIRONMENTAL & PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

7th grade Green Ambassadors building an aquaponic system. Solving real world problems allows students to examine the world from a variety of perspectives and, more importantly, practice life.



BEST PRACTICES IN ACTION



RELEVANT & ENGAGING INSTRUCTION

6th graders acting as Water Ministers to the Pharaoh. When students research, design, test and promote systems for improving river water in Ancient Egypt, they integrate skills and knowledge from all their academic studies and engage their imaginations.



SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

11th graders hiking in Joshua Tree. Outdoor education & field trips create strong **community** bonds, encourage students to take risks and teach resilience required to succeed as a first-in-your family college student.

COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

More than 250 volunteers showed up on a Saturday to help us replace our concrete lot with a playground at ECMS-Inglewood. Partners bring endless time, energy and resources to our campus, making even the unimaginable possible.



THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

3

Schools in the most marginalized
South Los Angeles communities

1,000

Middle school and
high school students

Crime rates

2x

the national average

+80%

of our students qualify
for free or reduced lunch

35%

of our students didn't grow
up speaking English at home





SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ECS' unique educational model has earned recognition locally and nationally – ranging from Los Angeles County to the President, who chose Environmental Charter High School (ECHS), as one of only six schools as a Race to the Top Commencement Challenge finalist. Most importantly, ECS is transforming and revitalizing the communities it serves with high performing schools, a commitment to service, and positive youth empowerment.



ranked in the top 3% of
**U.S. Public
High Schools**
by U.S. News
& World Report



Environmental Protection Agency
Award for working to protect
public health and the environment



50 Schools
across California have
adopted our curriculum
and best practices



Inaugural recipient of National
Green Ribbon Schools Award

A person is sitting on a blue plastic chair, viewed from behind, looking at a wall covered in various college posters. The posters include logos for Howard Bison, Cal State Monterey Bay, Sacramento State, Columbia College, Mills College, and USC. The person is wearing a light blue t-shirt and dark pants. The floor is concrete with a yellow line.

98%

of our students graduate with requirements to attend a 4-year college

only 35%

of California high school graduates meet acceptance requirements

1st

And most of our students are the first in their families to attend college



Matt Dang
CLASS OF 2012

Recruited by Brown University to start a student-run bike shop.

OUR GRADUATES

ECS' impact does not end at graduation.

Kate Spence
CLASS OF 2013

Traveled to Alaska over winter break to study mercury contamination



Jordan Howard
CLASS OF 2012

Consults with non-profits and corporations to create and facilitate youth engagement initiatives

Izzy Cortes
CLASS OF 2013

Seeing a need, founded a Social Justice Office on El Camino's College campus



STRATEGIC GOALS



OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- 1 Build an effective charter management organization that improves our efficiency and ensures consistent culture across schools.
- 2 Implement succession and development strategies to achieve long term growth goals.



RIGHT FACILITIES

- 1 Build facilities to meet projected increases in student enrollment.
- 2 Build mission-aligned campuses that bring learning to life.



MASTER OF OUR OWN BEST PRACTICES

- 1 Continuously refine teacher development & evaluation system to ensure implementation and efficacy of ECS best practices.
- 2 Increase student achievement and capacity to be critical reasoners, collaborative communicators and creative contributors.
- 3 Develop systems for program evaluation.



OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

1 Build an effective charter management organization that improves our efficiency and ensures consistent culture across schools.

OBJECTIVES:

- Formalize human resources processes to improve recruiting, retention and on-boarding to maintain a strong culture reflective of our values.
- Evaluate and improve central office systems to ensure efficient knowledge management, internal communications, facilities maintenance and technology support.
- Begin developing a learning and operations master technology plan and hire the technical team necessary to implement it.

Example: Implement a Cloud-Based Knowledge Management System

ECS will institute a cloud-based knowledge management system that provides all schools with access to key frameworks and documents, including operations manuals, curriculum, and internal newsletters. This system will facilitate sharing of solutions across school sites, enabling school leaders to focus on instruction and improving efficiency of support staff at both CMO (Charter Management Organization) and school sites.

2 Implement succession and development strategies to achieve long term growth goals.

OBJECTIVES:

- Create a pipeline and training program for future board members to ensure a fully-populated, informed and engaged board of directors that reflects the diversity of our stakeholders.
- Improve staff quality and grow future leaders, refining evaluation tools and piloting a performance-based compensation system to attract, retain and fairly compensate highly effective teachers.
- Implement workshops, mentoring and professional development opportunities to enhance our capacity to grow leaders from within the organization.
- Expand capacity to secure funding for capital projects, organizational growth and programs by hiring a full-time development manager, creating a development master plan and increasing brand visibility and consistency.

Example: Cadre Leadership Development

We need a pipeline of leaders who embody ECS's mission and vision. Recruiting leaders who are passionate about urban education, interdisciplinary curriculum, project-based learning and environmental issues is challenging. By implementing Cadre, a program that will help us develop leaders from within, we will be positioned for sustainable growth.



SPOTLIGHT: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

**Build family-like culture through staff retreats,
professional development and family events**

Building and maintaining a family-like culture across one or two school sites is relatively easy. As we grow, intentional processes, such as staff camping retreats, environmental professional development, and monthly family events will ensure that all stakeholders continue to feel committed to and invested in our culture, values, and best practices.

SPOTLIGHT: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Turn innovative programs into opportunities to generate sponsorship and increase development capacity

ECBS' unique Career Day inspires and enlightens students while providing an opportunity for business and community leaders to network. This event strengthens community partnerships and is beginning to draw sponsorship dollars. We aim to leverage this and other innovative programs into opportunities to connect with new partners, generate sponsorship and grow development capacity.



The background of the slide features a close-up of a globe, showing continents in various colors like yellow, green, and blue. In the bottom left corner, a pair of red-handled scissors is visible, partially cut off by the edge of the frame. A large, semi-transparent blue rectangle covers the top and right portions of the slide, serving as a backdrop for the title and list.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- \$600,000 raised for ECMS-Inglewood
- \$500,000 additional dollars raised towards \$1 million needed to replace and add classrooms at ECHS
- Operation manuals for all support staff positions
- At least 6 credentialed staff to complete our Cadre program
- Increase board from 8 to 9 members
- At least two existing programs or events transitioned into sources of funding & partnerships
- Refreshed website, including search engine optimization and mobile optimization
- 90% of staff feel seen, heard and kept apprised of organizational happenings, according to survey results

A photograph of an indoor garden or greenhouse. In the foreground, several young tomato plants with green leaves and thin stems are growing in black plastic trays filled with dark soil. The trays are arranged in rows. In the background, a person with dark hair is visible, slightly out of focus, standing near a wooden structure. The overall scene is bright and green, suggesting a healthy growing environment.

RIGHT FACILITIES

1 Build facilities to meet projected increases in student enrollment.

OBJECTIVES:

- Expand and improve facilities at Environmental Charter High School, creating capacity to better serve 500 students.
- Add new building and upgrade existing facilities at Environmental Charter Middle School-Inglewood, creating capacity to serve 360 students.
- Complete expansion of Environmental Charter Middle School-Gardena, including additional reception area and projects funded by Prop K Urban Greening and Recreation Grant.

Example: Upgrade Inglewood Campus

ECMS-Inglewood's building has classroom space for only 200 students. There isn't enough power to support modern technology and run the heating and cooling. Sometimes classrooms register 98 degrees. We plan to upgrade the existing facilities and add sustainable classrooms that stay warmer and cooler by design.

2 Build mission-aligned campuses that bring learning to life.

OBJECTIVES:

- Create campuses that purposefully extend learning beyond classroom walls, including spaces that illustrate academic concepts, programs that foster student investment in our campuses and opportunities for students to share expertise with community.
- Create campuses that facilitate learning for visitors, including interactive features, signage and activities that demonstrate sustainability and student engagement.

Example: Expand Our Campus Tour Program

More than 1,000 visitors have participated in student-led tours on our high school campus. This unforgettable experience frequently leads to partnerships and sponsorship dollars. We will further capitalize on our tours by creating a tour training program and offering student-led tours across all campuses.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a school garden. In the foreground, several young tomato plants with green leaves and thin stems are growing in black plastic trays filled with dark soil. The trays are arranged in rows. In the background, more plants and a wooden fence are visible, slightly out of focus. A blue plastic chair is partially visible on the right side.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Two greenhouses, a water catchment system and a chicken coop at ECMS-Gardena
- Additional sustainable facility that includes recreation space, urban greening and accommodates 360 students at ECMS-Inglewood
- 14 new sustainable, modular classrooms on the ECHS campus
- Regularly scheduled student-led tours at all 3 campuses

SPOTLIGHT: RIGHT FACILITIES

Complete the expansion of Environmental Charter Middle School-Gardena

Partnerships increase our ability to be a resource to our community. ECS will be adding a playground at ECMS-Inglewood with KaBOOM! & The Smile Generation and increasing green and recreational space at ECMS-Gardena through a City of Los Angeles' Prop K grant. We are transforming dilapidated properties into urban green spaces that are a valuable resource and a safe haven for children to learn and play.





SPOTLIGHT: RIGHT FACILITIES

Expand our capacity to support programs that engage our students in hands-on problem solving.

At ECS, students develop a sense of purpose by identifying, researching and solving problems within their communities.

Sharing their solutions with their community inspires them to further action and creates authentic reasons for academic achievement. Our high school students created a bike shop where they are refurbishing old bikes and promoting sustainable transportation. We want to increase our facilities' capacity to support this and similar programs that inspire and engage our students to be creative problem solvers.

MASTERS OF OUR OWN BEST PRACTICES



1 Continuously refine teacher development & evaluation system to ensure implementation and efficacy of ECS best practices.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve systems for analyzing and improving best practice implementation, increasing amount and quality of best practice evidence collected.
- Developing a resource library of teaching videos, articles and links to support and inform each best practice element.
- Improve teacher effectiveness and maximize organization-wide expertise through cross-campus professional development that meets teachers' interests, celebrates success and expands their repertoire of teaching tools to meet the needs of all students.
- Provide opportunities for teachers who demonstrate mastery to develop further and maximize their impact through strategic partnerships and opportunities to teach other teachers.

Example: Implement Technology-Based Professional Development Tools

We plan to implement TeachBoost, a technology platform that allows us to gather, share and analyze teacher observation data. TeachBoost eases the collection and sharing of performance data and facilitates peer-to-peer collaboration. It will also allow us to create a library of videos, lesson plans, and articles illustrating each of our best practices. In addition, TeachBoost will enable us to analyze teacher performance data and customize professional development based on our strengths and weaknesses.

2

Increase student achievement and capacity to be critical reasoners, collaborative communicators and creative contributors.

OBJECTIVES:

- Align course descriptions and curricular materials to Common Core and Next Generation standards.
- Update interdisciplinary projects to reflect new standards' approach to critical thinking and inquiry.
- Improve standards-based grading and reporting system to provide more detailed feedback about student performance to teachers, students and families.
- Explore and implement additional instructional technology to support student learning.

Example: Summer Retreat to Develop Rigorous Standard-Aligned Curriculum

ECS values teacher-generated, mission-aligned curriculum that is tied to a range of standards, including state academic standards, state environmental standards, ESLRs and collaborative skills. We respond nimbly to changes and are one of the first schools in the state with a Common Core-aligned math curriculum certified as fulfilling the requirements for admission to University of California. A summer retreat will give a team of educators targeted time to complete the task of developing highly rigorous and engaging curriculum aligned to the Common Core Standards and Next Generation Science Standards.

3

Develop systems for program evaluation.

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop a system for tracking schools' progress on LCAP (Local Control and Accountability Plan) goals.
- Streamline data collection and analysis in order to facilitate reporting to grantors, authorizers and accreditation agencies.
- Develop systems for analyzing student achievement and its relationship to teacher performance.
- Develop our systems for measuring success of programs, including a revised organization-wide dashboard.

Example: Expand Our Campus Tour Program

Student achievement at ECS results from data-driven, reflective teaching. Over time our data have grown beyond state tests to include many heterogeneous data sources (e.g., climate surveys, standards scores, internal benchmark scores, college acceptance and persistence rates and AP scores). To continue to improve, we need to identify and implement a data integration system that will increase our capacity to analyze information and provide all stakeholders with improved access to it. Streamlining managing and reporting will provide teachers more time to analyze and act upon data.

SPOTLIGHT: BEST PRACTICES

**Expand professional development
opportunities through Green
Ambassadors Institute**

ECS's Green Ambassadors Institute offers professional development courses for educators and organizations looking to implement hands-on sustainable education. At GAI our teachers share their innovative work with teachers from across the state. Leading courses at GAI and at national conferences gives our master teachers a chance to deepen their own practice and impact education beyond our campuses. We plan to implement additional workshops, mini-conferences, and "office hours" to provide more opportunities for our teachers to share their expertise and develop their best practices.



SPOTLIGHT: BEST PRACTICES

Infuse existing interdisciplinary with hands-on engineering-based activities

When ECMS' 6th graders are thrust into the role of water minister to the Pharaoh, their interdisciplinary project on Ancient Egypt challenges them to solve problems using skills and content from math, English, history and science. New engineering standards inspired us to rework this project to include even more inquiry, model-making, and model-testing. This year our 6th graders will design and test multiple solar stills and water filtration systems, using digital sensors to measure their design's effect on water quality. As they work to achieve optimal design solutions, they connect the problems of the ancient world to the problems of their community today. We'd like to equip our teachers with the time and tools needed to infuse engineering into all of our interdisciplinary benchmark projects.



SPOTLIGHT: BEST PRACTICES

Launch an extensive alumni network

Our graduates' success is an important indicator of the effectiveness of our programs. Using Grad Tracker, ECHS monitors students' college persistence. Social media allows us to loosely track our graduates' careers and share job opportunities with them. We aim to expand our capacity to follow students longitudinally, including monitoring our middle school students' success in high school. The ten-year anniversary of our first graduating high school class provides us with the perfect opportunity to launch a more extensive alumni network that will strengthen our connections to former students and better measure the impact our programs have on our graduates.



EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- A reliable and valid teacher evaluation system that is tied to compensation of all full-time credentialed teachers
- A software system that allows us to access and manipulate teacher performance data and a wide range of student achievement data, including state tests, NWEA and internal assessments
- WASC accreditation at all three schools
- Improved teacher ratings in instructional best practices
- More robust system for tracking alumni

