



EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONAL SUMMARY

Duval Charter Schools at Arlington Customer Number: 225227

100 Bell Tel Way
Jacksonville, Florida 32216 US

Ms. Teresa Brown, Principal

Charter Schools USA

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REPORT INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Your ASSIST-Generated Executive Institutional Summary

The Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools (ASSIST) is a new, state-of-the-art alternative that allows schools to streamline and enhance their efforts to boost student achievement. Using ASSIST, a school can gain a better understanding of its past successes and opportunities and confidently build a solid, research-based plan for the future.

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and student learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way school leadership considers how to organize, maintain order, and stay faithful to the school's vision. A description of the level of stakeholder engagement, trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that the school implements to support student learning also contributes to the overall narrative.

The purpose of the Executive Institutional Summary (EIS) is to give schools an opportunity to tell their story, to describe their context both strengths and challenges so that the public and members of the school community have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and what it is deliberating as it engages in the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement.

This report is structured into 4 sections that give context about what the school faces on a day-to-day basis in providing teaching and learning in its community:

Section 1: Introduction

- Describes the community in which the school is located. Identifies the unique features and special challenges of this school community. Provides brief demographic information with regards to both students and staff and the community at large.

Section 2: Student Performance

- Gives a brief description of the school's vision about students and their performance.
- Provides a brief summary of student performance in this school. Identifies the school's goals and how the school will know they have achieved them. Describes the variety of the school's student performance assessments. Identifies how the staff engages in meaningful analysis of student work in order to modify instruction.
- Describes the school's student support programs and services. Identifies the ways in which the school ensures community/parent involvement in the life of the school.

Section 3: Challenges and Opportunities

- Identifies the major challenges the school has faced in the last 3 years and how it has addressed those challenges.

Section 4: Conclusion

- Identifies what the school is most proud of and why.
- Relates other information the school would like to share with the public and the school community.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Institution

District	Charter Schools USA
Country	US
State/Province	FL
City	Jacksonville
Governance	Public, Startup
Setting	
Type	Elementary
Grade(s)	Kindergarten, 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07
Religious Denomination	
Gender	
Enrollment	641

Contact

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EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONAL SUMMARY

Section 1: Introduction

Describe the community in which your school is located. What are the unique features and special challenges of your school community?

Briefly provide demographic information with regards to both students and staff and the community at large.

Narrative:

Duval Charter School at Arlington, is a comprehensive public charter school, opened in August 2010, located in Jacksonville, Florida. The area that surrounds the school is a mix between businesses and residential homes. The socio-economic environment is very depressed. The students that attend our school come from all over Jacksonville, which happens to be the largest geographic city in the United States spanning over 841 square miles. We bus students as far as 10 miles from the school and we have others that travel almost 30 miles to bring their children to the school. The staff at DCSA is a mix of experienced and new teachers.

Jacksonville is a very transient community as it is home to one of the the largest Naval Bases in the country, NAS JAX. We have many children whose parents serve in the military. DCSA is managed by Charter Schools USA, one of the largest providers of charter school management services in the nation. The school's governing board is the Renaissance Charter Foundation, Inc., Board of Directors. Duval Charter School is one of the largest charter schools in Duval County. Duval County Pubic Schools has over 125,000 students. As reported by the Duval County School District, the school district is approximately 44% black , 40% white and 7% hispanic. Our participation in the free and reduced lunch program is 68%.

Duval Charter School employs 49 faculty and staff members. Of the 37 teachers, 20 are first or second year teachers, 11 have between two and 10 years teaching experience, 6 have over 10 years of teaching experience. Additionally, 3 have advanced degrees. Several teachers are out-of-field in ESOL, but not in subject area. Additionally, 5 are ESOL endorsed and 2 are reading endorsed. At this time, none of the teachers are Board Certified. The faculty members are dedicated and caring. They work individually with students to promote learning. Reading and math tutoring are offered throughout the entire school year for students that need help in their classes or to pass their FCAT's.

Duval Charter School offers a full complement of extra-curricular activities including sports and clubs. Student participation is increasing in both sports and the after school clubs that we offer. We believe that we give our students a well-rounded education, academically, athletically, and socially, and prepare them to be lifelong learners and good citizens.

Students and their parents choose this school rather than an elementary school closer to their home because our school has more rigorous academic standards, as well as a uniform dress code, which helps to promote a more academically focused atmosphere. A challenge we sometimes face is students who struggle with the high standards that we set, who are not used to the rigorous curriculum. We are always working toward acclimating students toward pursuing higher education and staying focused on their studies, rather than being too preoccupied with the challenges they may face at home and in their communities.

Section 2: Student Performance

Give a brief description of your school's vision about students and their performance. Provide a brief summary of student performance in your school. What are your goals and how will you know you have achieved them?

Describe the variety of your school's student performance assessments. How does your staff engage in meaningful analysis of student work in order to modify instruction?

Describe the school's student support programs and services. In what ways does your school ensure community/parent involvement in the life of the school?

Narrative:

The leadership's philosophy and the school's vision work hand-in-hand with strong expectations and commitment from the stakeholders when it comes to students and their performance. The leadership instills in all school employees that we are not here for fame or fortune, but that we are here for the students. We were reminded at both staff meetings and student celebrations that "It's all about the kids" and the school's purpose is the betterment of all of our students. This philosophy and purpose ties directly to the school's vision statement, "All stakeholders will share the commitment to create a learning environment that integrates a research-based curriculum, a culture of student safety and success and concentration on academic vigor while focusing on citizenship and experiential learning through community engagement." It does not matter what a stakeholder's title or position is-- administrator, teacher, or support staff-- everyone working at Duval Charter School shares in the commitment to develop our students. This commitment might come in the way of providing extra help such as tutoring, lending an ear, providing support for someone who is experiencing difficulty at home, or providing materials such as notebook, paper and pen/pencil to someone who does not want his/her family financial status known. It is a philosophy and vision that we are proud of, and by which we define ourselves.

Along with commitment to our students come strong expectations for them. We set the bar high and challenge them to not only meet these expectations, but also to exceed them. In keeping with the school's vision, we provide an individualized academic program to all of our students, including tutoring across the curriculum, enrolling our Level 1 and Level 2 FCAT Math and Reading students in intensive classes, and recognizing when a student needs to be at an advanced level. We have on staff a reading and math coach to also assist students. Students are encouraged to join clubs, try out for an athletic team or participate in leadership roles like safety patrol.

Duval Charter School promotes Charter Schools USA's Non-Negotiable Goals and school FCAT goals. The CSUSA goals are divided into achievement and instructional goals. One example of an achievement goal is: "100% of students will meet or exceed proficiency on state specific accountability assessments". In addition to the CSUSA goals, each school in our network sets its FCAT goals. These goals are based on the previous year scores and are aimed towards the school receiving an "A" grade according to the state of Florida's A+ School grading system. Each year the goals are reviewed to see if they were met. This process is part of the principal's evaluation. At the end of our first year, we will participate in Strategic Planning and set goals within five Strategic Priorities.

Teachers at Duval Charter School go through training at the beginning of each school year that emphasizes the importance of both formative and summative assessments to determine students' learning. Duval Charter School uses a variety of performance assessments including the FCAT, Benchmarks, Fair, and FLIKRS. Teachers also take workshops on research-based instructional strategies to use in their classrooms. Each teacher is required to know how a student scored on his/her past FCAT, as well as benchmark tests, and then to work with each student to set both classroom and FCAT goals.

Duval Charter School provides support and services by employing a guidance/student service counselor, and ESOL and ESE

Representatives. Tutoring is available across the curriculum for all students. A speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, a school psychologist and a staffing specialist are available through the Duval County School District. The school also provides free and reduced lunch to 68% of the students.

Duval Charter School has many opportunities for parents to be involved in the school, as they are required to complete 20 volunteer hours per school year. Volunteer opportunities include working in the copy room, assisting in the cafeteria and helping with a variety of office tasks and school projects. The school has a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that meets monthly and helps the school with events and activities as well as raising money to support school programs.

Section 3: Challenges and Opportunities

What are the major challenges your school has faced in the last 3 years and how have you addressed those challenges?

Narrative:

As a new school we have had a unique set of challenges. One of the greatest challenges has been indoctrinating teachers into the CSUSA culture. Our corporate office offered two weeks of new teacher induction training which was very helpful for teachers who have been with DCSA since the beginning. It has been much harder for teachers to grasp the CSUSA culture if they were hired during the actual school year. We spend time every Wednesday in professional development.

Busing has been another challenge. Jacksonville is so spread out that everyone who comes to school at DCSA wants transportation. We use an outside vendor A & S Transportation to provide transportation for our students. Due to the widespread area of Duval County, bus service cannot be provided to all corners of the county. This results in students transferring to other schools.

Another challenge facing Duval Charter School, as well as schools across the country, is attracting, hiring and retaining the most highly qualified teachers in a school with the high levels of need and diversity. As state legislatures across the board are cutting school budgets, laying off teachers, and freezing or even cutting salaries, attracting and keeping the best and brightest is becoming more and more difficult. The most talented, who are also the most employable, will leave the teaching profession if salaries are not competitive with other private industry employment opportunities. While teaching is a special calling, the rigors of continuing education, bureaucratic demands, long hours, and the stress of meeting the daily challenges of today's students takes a toll on all those who are committed to providing the highest level of education. To overcome these problems, administrators of all schools must incorporate all the latest techniques and advances in people management skills to ensure a highly professional work environment. Recognition, proper compensation, respectful demeanor, and listening to all stakeholders are critical to succeeding. While hiring new teachers is easier in a distressed market, keeping them after they are fully trained and more experienced is far more difficult. They will leave quickly if their work environment is poorly managed or greater financial rewards are offered. The same principles apply to support staff. All employees require the understanding and support of his/her administration to do his/her jobs properly.

Section 4: Conclusion

What is your school most proud of and why?

Is there any other information you would like to share with the public and the school community?

Narrative:

At Duval Charter School we are most proud of our Employees. Not only do they maintain professionalism in their fields, but are also willing to go beyond the limits of their classroom to support the needs of the students and parents. As a new school they are so many unexpected challenges and needs but the faculty is always willing to go the extra mile. We are also proud of the involvement of our parents. The parents are always willing to volunteer and want to be part of the success at Duval Charter.

Two years ago, Charter School USA, our management company, partnered with the Clarion Council to bring character education into our schools. The program, called STRIVE, is another area that we are proud of as it allows us to recognize and reward students who are doing the right thing.