



MEDIA RELEASE

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The Charter Institute at Erskine experiment is working: South Carolina Report Card data shows growth

COLUMBIA – In 2017, the Charter Institute at Erskine (Institute) was established by Erskine College as a charter school authorizer to improve public education across the state of South Carolina. After only one year of operations, the recently released South Carolina Report Card details schools that transferred to the Institute are moving the needle unlike ever before.

Charter Institute at Erskine CEO and Superintendent Cameron Runyan said, “When the Institute was created, we made a commitment to be fair, transparent, and consistent in everything we do as an organization. While our schools are held to a higher level of accountability than others, we walk with them each step of the way offering top notch support because we are a partnership. We celebrate these data as they are a testament to the admirable work of both the schools and the Institute.”

This current release of data represents the Institute’s first year statewide student population of approximately 9,000 students, with roughly two-thirds of students attending high poverty Title I schools.

State data show that graduation rates amongst African American and English learning students with Institute schools are the highest of any statewide authorizer. The on-time graduation rate for the Institute’s brick and mortar schools in 2019 was 96.2%, which significantly surpassed the state’s average of 81.1%. This reflects a 12% rate of increase from the same school’s 2018 graduation rates. Virtual schools within the Institute saw a 17% increase from the prior year, a one-year rate that is unrivaled in the groups’ history of continuous improvement.

“The Class of 2019 at Gray Collegiate Academy was a special group of students,” said Gray Collegiate Academy principal Dr. Brian Newsome, who’s 99.2% graduation rate ranks as highest in the school’s history. “The partnership we have with the Charter Institute at Erskine has elevated our school to heights we always knew were achievable with the help of the amazing professionals at the Institute.”

In addition to increasing graduation rates portfolio wide, Institute schools produced concurrent gains in the percentage of students demonstrating college or career readiness, with 70.3% producing scores on the most recent state assessments that correspond to preparedness for college or workforce entry. This is an 8% improvement from the year prior.

South Carolina Virtual Charter School, the Institute’s largest school consisting of approximately 3,000 students, saw exceptional ratings on the Advanced Placement (AP) exams. Students who earn a score of 3, 4, or 5 on an AP exam are often eligible to receive credit for the equivalent course(s) at colleges and universities that award credit for AP exam performance. 71% of South Carolina Virtual Charter School students produced scores between a 3 and 5. These levels of performance exceed the state average of 58%.

“This year’s success for South Carolina Virtual Charter School directly correlates with our amazing teachers and staff, and the support we received from our authorizer, the Charter Institute at Erskine,” said principal Dr. Cherry Daniel. “We made it clear from day one the reason for our transfer to the Institute was the hands-on approach they provide. From our administration to our faculty and staff, we understand if any assistance is needed, the Institute is a phone call away.”

Charter Institute at Erskine Director Vamshi Rudrapati added, “We tell our schools daily that we will trade autonomy for outcomes. These results prove that our schools believe in the Institute philosophy. We are thrilled to see such progress in such a brief period, but we still understand that there is much more work to be done. Together with our schools, the Institute will continue to #MoveTheNeedle.”

The Charter Institute at Erskine commends the South Carolina Department of Education for releasing the South Carolina Report Card to allow schools the time to focus on school improvement opportunities. For more information on the Institute and its schools, please visit www.erskinecharters.org.

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