



ECS Moving Full Speed Ahead Toward Expansion

Pittsburgh, PA, SEPTEMBER 28, 2018 - The Environmental Charter School (ECS) continues to move full speed ahead on what will be a world-class middle school and high school for the city of Pittsburgh. The new middle school, located at the former Rogers school in Garfield, is under renovation and on track to open for students August, 2019. Recruitment for additional students across ECS's K-8 system has already begun, and applications open for the lottery on October 1, with priority given to Pittsburgh residents and families qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Expanding to the third location allows for additional spots for enrollment at every grade level.

“We can’t wait to share this space with our families and the community, and bring this beautiful building back to its original use —a thriving public school,” note Jon McCann, CEO and founding principal.

Given the priority on bringing this building to opening and expanding programming for the K-8, the ECS Board of Trustees and administration concluded to delay the enrollment/admissions of the 9th grade academy in a decision at the monthly meeting Wednesday evening. “ECS is committed to creating quality programs in first-class facilities, and the process to establish a ninth grade program that launches students into a solid high school experience should not be rushed,” said Molly Bennett, ECS Board of Trustees Chair.

“We’ve been working hard the last two years to bring to life two enormous projects, and we are committed to investing in our current program and the development of our new programming before students set foot in our spaces,” noted Jon McCann, CEO and founding principal of ECS. In delaying 9th grade student enrollment, ECS can recruit and employ teachers and

administrators for quality program development over the course of the year, and finalize the location for 10th-12th grade.

ECS also learned valuable lessons in the development of the middle school that will be applied to the high school design and implementation —lessons that will make the high school a green and healthy facility and a state-of-the-art learning environment. From indoor air quality and energy consumption to developmentally responsive design and infrastructure, ECS needs additional time to design and implement a space that meets the needs of students and pushes the boundaries on environmental health.

Expanding the Environmental Charter School to include a high school and additional K-8 has been a three-year process requiring hard work, determination, and the ability to navigate complex systems. On May 1, 2014, ECS submitted an amendment to their charter to include an additional K-8 and expansion to high school. The Pittsburgh Public School Education Committee of the Pittsburgh Public Schools reviewed the application and deemed it acceptable for approval. The Pittsburgh Public School Board countered that recommendation, and denied the amendment in July 2014. After the denial, ECS reviewed feedback and submitted additional information in August 2015. The amendment submission was once again denied by the Pittsburgh Public School Board in December 2015.

The Environmental Charter School (ECS) submitted an appeal to the initial Pittsburgh Public School Board decision to the Pennsylvania State Charter Appeal Board (CAB) in August 2016. ECS presented the final oral argument at the Charter Appeal Board (CAB), on January 17, 2017, in Harrisburg, and the CAB ruled in ECS's favor.

“Delaying 9th grade enrollment was a difficult decision for the board, and one that was not taken lightly,” said Molly Bennett, Board Chair. “The potential for authentic program development and designing exceptional facilities is an exciting opportunity that we want to fully embrace. We have the unique opportunity to design and to implement something completely new in front of Pittsburgh’s children, and we want to do it right.”

Members of the board and administration are available to sit down with anyone who wants to discuss the decision further. Please contact Nikole Sheaffer to set up a time.



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