

V.B.

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO BE PROPOSED:

March 6, 2019

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, renews the charter of Great Oaks Charter School from July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2021, subject to the Commissioner's March 6, 2019, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____, this sixth day of March, Two Thousand Nineteen.

Signed: _____
Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Secretary
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Interim Commissioner of Education

DATE: March 6, 2019

SUBJECT: Renewal of State Charter – Great Oaks Charter School, Bridgeport

Executive Summary

Introduction

In accordance with subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), charters may be renewed, upon application, in accordance with the provisions for the granting of new charters. The State Board of Education (SBE) may renew a charter for a period of up to five years. The SBE makes renewal decisions based on evidence of the following performance standards:

1. *School Performance:* Is the school a successful model resulting in strong student outcomes and a positive school climate?
2. *Stewardship, Governance and Management:* Is the school financially and organizationally healthy and viable?
3. *Student Population:* Is the school promoting equity by effectively attracting, enrolling and retaining students, particularly among targeted populations?
4. *Legal Compliance:* Is the school acting in compliance with applicable laws and regulations?

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the SBE carefully evaluate qualitative and quantitative evidence, and longitudinal data aligned to the four performance standards outlined above when making charter renewal decisions. The charter performance framework drives the CSDE's charter school accountability systems and processes, including initial approval decisions, annual monitoring and renewal determinations. From inception to renewal, charter schools must abide by the CSDE's charter school accountability procedures and performance framework. Charter monitoring takes place through annual reporting, meetings, correspondence and site visits, as appropriate. In accordance with C.G.S. § 10-66bb(g), a charter may be renewed upon application, if the charter school has demonstrated satisfactory performance relative to the four performance standards.

History/Background

Great Oaks Charter School opened in the fall of 2014. The latest CSDE audited student enrollment data from 2017-18 reported 400 students in Grades 6-9 with 97.8 percent residing in Bridgeport (the host district), and the remaining students coming from six area towns. Table 1, on page 13, of the attached Charter Renewal Report provides 2017-18 student enrollment and demographic data. Eighty-six point five percent of Great Oaks Charter School's students qualify for free or reduced price meals and 19.0 percent of the students receive special education services. The mission of Great Oaks Charter School is "to prepare students for college success through high-dosage tutoring, quality instruction, and a focus on career and college readiness." The school uses a cadre of 60 tutors to provide individualized educational support to students in reading, writing and mathematics each school day. The school works with the Great Oaks Foundation, a charter school management organization (CMO) that supports three other charter schools in New York, New Jersey and Delaware.

Charter Renewal Process

Application for Renewal of Charter: The CSDE accepted an application for the renewal of Great Oaks Charter School's charter on October 5, 2018. The application detailed the charter school's progress, operations, and achievement in relation to the CSDE's charter school performance standards: (a) school performance; (b) stewardship, governance and management; (c) student population; and (d) legal compliance. Great Oaks Charter School submitted data and evidence to substantiate the charter school's written responses.

A renewal team comprised of CSDE staff with expertise in curriculum, assessments, special education, English learners, school management, finance, and school governance reviewed the renewal application and requested clarification and additional information, where necessary.

Renewal Site Visit: On November 7, 2018, the CSDE renewal team conducted an on-site visit at Great Oaks Charter School. The purpose of the on-site visit was to observe Great Oaks Charter School's programs, policies, practices, and procedures to assess their efficacy and fidelity to the school's charter and aligned operating systems. Evidence was collected through the on-site visit observations, document reviews, interviews, and focus groups. The team spoke with board members, administrators, staff, parents, and community members. The team used this process to ensure that the school is functioning in compliance with the law and the school's mission. The team verified the responses detailed in the renewal application regarding compliance with the law and the CSDE's performance framework and accountability plan.

Invitation for Written Comment: The CSDE solicited written comments on the renewal of Great Oaks Charter School from the Superintendent of Bridgeport Public Schools and from contiguous school districts: Fairfield, Stratford and Trumbull. The CSDE received a letter from the Superintendent of Bridgeport indicating an inability to support renewal of the charter citing fiscal uncertainty in the district (see Attachment A).

Public Hearing: Joseph Vrabely, Jr., member of the SBE, and CSDE staff held a public hearing on October 11, 2018, in the city of Bridgeport, and heard from 37 individuals on the potential charter renewal of Great Oaks Charter School and the impact it is having on the community. Public hearing participants included members of the Great Oaks Charter School community, including family members, students, school staff and community members. Over 90 people attended the public hearing. Forty individuals offered testimony supporting the school's efforts and the renewal of the charter. No one spoke out against the renewal of the school's charter.

Site Visit Findings

The most recent available data and information contained in the Charter Renewal Report and the Next Generation Accountability Report 2016-17 (page 8), indicates Great Oaks Charter School's performance according to the four performance standards. The report highlights school strengths and areas for continued growth.

Strengths include:

- No significant findings, conditions, or internal weaknesses were uncovered in Great Oaks Charter School's last three certified financial audits.
- Overall the student body reflects the demographics of the surrounding community.
- The school demonstrates strong community support as evidenced by testimony provided by individuals at the public hearing and interviews with parents during the site visit.
- School website and Governing Board documents demonstrate that the Governing Board meetings are open and accessible to the public.
- Great Oaks Charter School's student average daily attendance has remained consistent and is relatively high at or near 95 percent for the last three years.
- The school has exceeded the state testing participation rate of 95 percent in ELA and mathematics for all students in each of the past three years.
- The Smarter Balanced average percentage of target achieved in mathematics for all students increased from 52.0 percent in 2016-17 to 55.6 percent in 2017-18, but below the state's 61.9 percent.

Areas of Concern:

- Great Oaks Charter School's 2016-17 Accountability Index stands at 50.1, below the state index of 73.2 percent.
- The 2017-18 Smarter Balanced Assessment percentage of Great Oaks Charter School students achieving at or above proficiency (level 3 and 4) in ELA for all students, (Table 4) is 16.6 percent, 10.0 percentage points below Bridgeport's 26.6 percent.
- The 2017-18 Smarter Balanced Assessment percentage of Great Oaks Charter School students achieving at or above proficiency (level 3 and 4) in mathematics for Grade 8, (Table 4) is 9.5 percent, 2.3 percentage points below Bridgeport's 11.8 percent.
- The student chronic absenteeism rate increased seven percentage points from 11.0 percent in 2016-17 to 18.0 percent in 2017-18.
- The student suspension rate of 26.0 percent for 2017-18 is over three times the state average of 6.8 percent.
- Turnover of students in 2017-18 was approximately 25 percent.
- A review of Great Oaks Charter School's staff file on February 1, 2019, of the 34 staff requiring certification, only 14 or 41 percent hold a valid certificate for the positions they hold. Of the 20 uncertified staff, 8 have applications under review by the CSDE, Teacher Certification Office, and 12 applications are in the mail to Teacher Certification Office for review.

Charter Renewal Recommendation

Great Oaks' student performance on the Smarter Balanced Assessment in ELA declined slightly over the last two years, student rates of proficiency on the test are consistently below the state and has also fallen below that of the host district. Additionally, while its student performance on the Smarter Balanced Assessment in mathematics has increased over the last two years, it is consistently below the state overall, and that of the host district in Grade 8. Great Oaks Charter School must focus on providing increased explicit instruction in the development of foundational skills in reading and mathematics as evidenced by the deficits in student achievement. The Turnaround Office will work with Great Oaks Charter School to develop a corrective action plan focusing on student achievement:

- Implementation of a comprehensive assessment plan with continued usage of pre-and post-assessment of basic skills. The pre-assessment will indicate whether future diagnostic testing is required and the level of intervention that is necessary to improve student achievement. The post assessment will provide evidence of the rate of growth, determine student competency, and the achievement of growth targets.
- Decision making that is data driven involving student growth and performance relative to peers. The data will help inform long-range goals, instruction, and efficacy of interventions for each student.
- Adjustment of school schedule to provide additional targeted, intensive instruction in reading and mathematics for the neediest students. This time needs to be in addition to the core mathematics and ELA instruction.
- Incorporation of skills-based scientific, research-based instruction and interventions, provided by certified staff, on decoding, fluency, and numeracy in order to increase students' achievement levels in reading and mathematics. Great Oaks Charter School will seek to provide technical assistance in the development of a more extensive menu of interventions in reading and mathematics.
- Professional development of certified staff focused on skills-based scientific, research-based instruction and interventions, on decoding, fluency, and numeracy in order to increase students' achievement levels in reading and mathematics.
- Utilization of high interest/low readability texts in multiple content areas that are matched to students' independent reading level/Lexile score to enable practice of reading more fluently, therefore increasing comprehension.
- Continued evaluation and revamping of curricular materials, instructional strategies and practices to ensure alignment to the CT Core Standards and the inherent level of rigor. Specific efforts need to focus on differentiation in order to support student access to content.

Based on Great Oaks Charter School's performance indicators, the CSDE recommends that the SBE renew the school's charter for a period of two years, with the following conditions:

1. By April 5, 2019, Great Oaks Charter School shall submit a plan for CSDE review and approval to bring its staff into certification compliance by: (a) ensuring staff responsible for hiring clearly understand the certification requirements of each position; (b) providing a clear pathway and support to certification with established milestones and timelines; (c) including monitoring and interventions for non-compliance; and (d) reporting of non-compliant staff including certification targets, schedules, action steps, including responsible school staff, due April 5, 2019, June 30, 2019 and August 2, 2019 to ensure compliance. The plan shall be developed in consultation with CSDE's Talent Office and the Bureau of Special Education. Great Oaks Charter School shall implement the corrective actions within thirty days following the Commissioner's acceptance of the plan.

2. By April 5, 2019, Great Oaks Charter School shall submit a plan for CSDE review and approval to minimize behavioral incidents resulting in suspensions and by adopting a restorative discipline model for the school including: (a) pre-teaching and re-teaching expected behaviors; (b) isolating the root causes of behavioral issues; (c) identifying interventions to target root causes; (d) strengthening school discipline policies and procedures; (e) monitoring interventions and applying midcourse corrections, as necessary; (f) establishing suspension targets to ensure dramatic improvement; and (g) formulating detailed plans to engage school stakeholders, particularly parents, teachers and administrators, in developing a corrective action. Additionally, Great Oaks Charter School shall submit its year-to-date number of suspensions, and the concentration of students with one or more suspension to the CSDE at year-end, June 30, 2019, and on a bi-monthly basis beginning October 2019. The plan shall be developed in consultation with CSDE's Turnaround Office. Great Oaks Charter School shall implement the corrective actions within thirty days following the Commissioner's acceptance of the plan.
3. By April 5, 2019, Great Oaks Charter School shall submit a corrective action plan acceptable to the Commissioner. The corrective action plan must target and address chronic absenteeism by: (a) isolating the root causes of chronic absenteeism; (b) identifying interventions to target root causes; and (c) monitoring interventions and applying midcourse corrections, as necessary. Additionally, Great Oaks Charter School shall submit its year-to-date number of student chronic absenteeism to the CSDE at year-end, June 30, 2019, and on a bi-monthly basis beginning October 2019. The plan shall be developed in consultation with CSDE's Turnaround Office. Great Oaks Charter School shall implement the corrective actions within thirty days following the Commissioner's acceptance of the plan.
4. By April 5, 2019, Great Oaks Charter School shall submit a corrective action plan acceptable to the Commissioner. The corrective action plan must include measures to improve student academic achievement. Additionally, Great Oaks Charter School shall submit to the CSDE, on a bi-monthly basis beginning October 2019, a report monitoring its year-to-date progress at improving student academic achievement. The plan shall be developed in consultation with CSDE's Turnaround Office and the Bureau of Special Education. Great Oaks Charter School shall implement the corrective actions within thirty days following the Commissioner's acceptance of the plan.
5. CSDE will conduct interim site visits in August and November of 2019, and February of 2020, to review academic progress, and monitor year-to-date number of suspensions and students at or approaching chronic absenteeism and certified staff compliance.
6. In the fall of 2019 and 2020, Great Oaks Charter School will be required to appear before the State Board of Education's Accountability and Support Committee to provide an update on the status of Great Oaks Charter School's academic progress, year-to-date number of suspensions, student daily attendance and students at or approaching chronic absenteeism and certified staff compliance.

The CSDE will notify Great Oaks Charter School of action taken by the SBE following its meeting on March 6, 2019. The school will be advised of relevant technical assistance opportunities designed to improve its educational program. The CSDE will conduct follow-up visits, announced and unannounced to ensure that Great Oaks Charter School is addressing the issues raised in this memorandum.

Prepared by: Robert E. Kelly, Charter School Program Manager
Turnaround Office

Reviewed by: Lisa Lamenzo, Bureau Chief
Turnaround Office

Approved by: Desi D. Nesmith, Chief Turnaround Officer
Turnaround Office

CHARTER RENEWAL REPORT | 2019

Charter School Information:		
Charter School Name:	Great Oaks Charter School	
School Director:	John Scalice	
School Board Chairperson:	Susan Briggs	
Location (City/Town):	Bridgeport	
Rating Key:		
Meets	The school demonstrates effective policies and practices, resulting in positive outcomes.	
Pending Action	The school requires minor modifications to its policies and/or practices. The school is taking satisfactory measures to remedy and address these issues in a timely manner.	
Does Not Meet	The schools falls below performance expectations with significant concerns noted, which require immediate attention and intervention.	
Standard 1: School Performance Indicators	Points/Max	% Points Earned
Accountability Index:	426.2/850	50.1
Notes and Evidence:		
<p>The 2016-17 Great Oaks Charter School Accountability Index score of 50.1 is below average when compared to the state school Accountability Index score of 73.2. Schools that meet Standard 1: School Performance Indicators are schools earning an accountability index score that is in the state's top three quartiles. Great Oaks Charter School's accountability score of 50.1 places its performance in the bottom quartile, which does not meet Standard 1. Great Oaks Charter School's 2016-17 Next Generation Accountability Report shown in detail on the next page.</p>		



Next Generation Accountability Report: 2016-17

Choose a District

Choose a School

School Category (1-5)
(1 is highest)

State Support Designation
(Cat. 4 and 5 schools only)

School of Distinction?

Great Oaks Charter School District	Great Oaks Charter School_2940113	4	Turnaround	No
------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------	-------------------	-----------

Choose a District, then Choose a School. To refresh the District List, clear the School name.

Grade Range: 6 - 8

No:	Indicator	Index/Rate ¹	Target	Points Earned	Max Points	% Points Earned	State Avg Index/Rate		
1a.	ELA Performance Index – All Students	47.0	75	31.3	50	62.6%	67.1		
1b.	ELA Performance Index – High Needs Students	45.8	75	30.5	50	61.0%	55.9		
1c.	Math Performance Index – All Students	43.2	75	28.8	50	57.6%	62.2		
1d.	Math Performance Index – High Needs Students	42.5	75	28.3	50	56.7%	50.5		
1e.	Science Performance Index – All Students	39.1	75	26.0	50	52.1%	55.3		
1f.	Science Performance Index – High Needs Students	38.5	75	25.7	50	51.4%	45.2		
2a.	ELA Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – All Students	37.9%	100	37.9	100	37.9%	55.4%		
2b.	ELA Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – High Needs Students	35.9%	100	35.9	100	35.9%	49.8%		
2c.	Math Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – All Students	52.0%	100	52.0	100	52.0%	61.7%		
2d.	Math Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – High Needs Students	53.4%	100	53.4	100	53.4%	53.7%		
4a.	Chronic Absenteeism – All Students	11.0%	<=5%	38.1	50	76.1%	9.9%		
4b.	Chronic Absenteeism – High Needs Students	12.4%	<=5%	35.2	50	70.4%	15.8%		
5	Preparation for CCR – % taking courses		75%	0.0	0		70.7%		
6	Preparation for CCR – % passing exams		75%	0.0	0		43.5%		
7	On-track to High School Graduation		94%	0.0	0		87.8%		
8	4-year Graduation All Students (2016 Cohort)		94%	0.0	0		87.4%		
9	6-year Graduation - High Needs Students (2014 Cohort)		94%	0.0	0		82.0%		
10	Postsecondary Entrance (Class of 2016)		75%	0.0	0		72.0%		
11	Physical Fitness (estimated part rate) and (fitness rate)	100.0%	4.8%	75%	3.2	50	6.4%	92.0%	51.6%
12	Arts Access		60%	0.0	0		50.5%		
Accountability Index				426.2	850	50.1%			

These statistics represent the results from the third year of Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability Model for districts and schools. For detailed information and resources about every indicator including the rationale for its inclusion, the methodology used as well as links to resources, research, and evidence-based strategies, please consult the document titled [Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement](#).

This model is the direct result of an extensive consultation process over a two year period. The CSDE sought feedback from district and school leaders, Connecticut educators, state and national experts, CSDE staff, and many others. This model was originally outlined in Connecticut's flexibility application to the U.S. Department of Education and formally approved by the USED in August 2015 and is now included in Connecticut's state plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act.

¹ Unrounded index/rates are used in calculations. Values rounded to 1 decimal are displayed.

Gap Indicators	Non-High Needs Rate	High Needs Rate	Size of Gap	State Gap Mean + 1 Stdev**	Is Gap an Outlier?
Achievement Gap Size Outlier?					N
ELA Performance Index Gap	53.4	45.8	7.7	16.6	
Math Performance Index Gap	47.0	42.5	4.5	18.5	
Science Performance Index Gap		38.5		16.5	
Six-Year Graduation Rate Gap (2014 Cohort)					N/A

If the Non-High Needs Rate exceeds the ultimate target (75 for Performance Index and 94% for graduation rate), then the ultimate target is displayed and used for gap calculations. If size gap exceeds the state mean gap plus one standard deviation, then the gap is an outlier.

Participation Rate	Rate
ELA – All Students	99.0%
ELA – High Needs Students	98.8%
Math – All Students	97.7%
Math – High Needs Students	97.3%
Science – All Students	99.0%
Science – High Needs Students	98.8%

Standard 2: Stewardship, Governance and Management Indicators:	Rating
2.1. Fiscal Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
2.2. Financial Reporting and Compliance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
2.3. Financial Viability	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
2.4. Governance and Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
2.5. School Facility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
Notes and Evidence:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Indicator 2.1: CSDE site visit staff reviewed Great Oaks Charter School’s last three certified financial audits and uncovered no significant findings, conditions or internal control weakness.</p> <p>Indicator 2.2: CSDE site visit staff reviewed Great Oaks Charter School’s last three certified financial audits, Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual (APPM) and budgets, interviewed the, school principal and director of operations and governing board members. Staff from the CSDE’s Office of Internal Audit determined the APPM contains standard sections of an APPM. The reviewers determined Great Oaks Charter School completed on-time submission of certified audits and annual budgets.</p> <p>Indicator 2.3: Staff from CSDE’s Office of Internal Audit reviewed Great Oaks Charter School’s last three certified financial audits and determined Great Oaks Charter School’s debt to asset ratio (total liabilities/total assets) and current asset ratio (current assets/current liabilities) meets or exceeds the ranges recommended by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), signifying overall financial health. The school’s days of unrestricted cash (46 days) is below NACSA minimum threshold of 60 days and a low total margin (net income/total revenue) indicate that the school operates on a tight budget. It is important that the school take steps to secure additional revenues going forward.</p> <p>Indicator 2.4: A review of Great Oaks Charter School’s school policies regarding anti-nepotism and conflict of interest were found to be in complete compliance with CSDE administrative oversight guidelines. Great Oaks Charter School’s policies and procedures regarding background checks of staff and board members, open board meetings and board membership training were reviewed and found to comply with state and federal laws, rules and regulation. This finding supported by a review of background check and board training records and the review of the schools website and governing board meeting minutes.</p> <p>Indicator 2.5: As evidenced by the site visit, Great Oaks Charter School has a safe and well-maintained school facility to support teaching and learning. The facility has been approved by the Bridgeport Fire Marshal and Building Department. The school has proof of property insurance.</p> 	

Standard 3: Student Population Indicators	Rating
3.1. Recruitment and Enrollment Process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
3.2. Waitlist and Enrollment Data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
3.3. Demographic Representation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
3.4. Family and Community Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
3.5. School Culture and Climate	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DNM

Notes and Evidence:

- Indicator 3.1:** The latest CSDE audited student enrollment data from 2017-18 reported 400 students in Grades 6-9 with 97.8 percent residing in Bridgeport (the host district) and the remaining students coming from six area towns. A review of the school’s student enrollment policy, and interviews with school staff, board members and parents determined all students are admitted through a blind lottery.
- Indicator 3.2:** A review of Great Oaks Charter School’s waitlist information (Table 3 page 13) determined it maintains a positive waitlist of families beyond the available number of seats. In 2018-19, 60 students were on the waiting list. The waitlist has included students each year for the past three years.
- Indicator 3.3:** A review of Great Oaks Charter School’s 2017-18 Public School Information System (PSIS) data reports students from minority groups represent 96.0 percent of Great Oaks Charter School’s student population and 86.5 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced-price meals. The English learner population is 14.0 percent. The percentage of special education students at Great Oaks Charter School is 19.0 percent. Overall the student body reflects the demographics of the surrounding community.
- Indicator 3.4:** Great Oaks Charter School demonstrates strong community support as evidenced at the on-site visit by the CSDE during the parent interviews. All of those interviewed described the communication between the school and families as strong. All expressed support for what they perceive is a strong curriculum and the school’s dedication to ensuring each child’s needs are met. Parents indicated they were happy with the school’s commitment to serving students with diverse needs. Students testified during the public hearing that they are generally happy with the educational choice opportunity the school provides. Over 90 individuals attended the October 11, 2018, renewal public hearing, and 37 individuals offered testimony supporting the school’s efforts and the renewal of its charter. No one spoke out against the renewal of the school’s charter.
- Indicator 3.5:** A review of Great Oaks Charter School’s student average daily attendance, chronic absenteeism and suspension rates (Table 2, page 13) are of concern. While the average daily attendance is fairly consistent and relatively high it did slip slightly below the state goal of 95 percent to 93.5 percent in 2017-18. The chronic absenteeism rate of 18.0 percent in 2017-18 for all Great Oaks Charter School students is above the state average of 10.7 percent, and increased 7 percentage points from 11.0 percent in 2016-17. The chronic absenteeism rate for special education students of 29.7 percent in 2017-18 is almost twice the non-special education student rate of 15.4 percent. The suspension rate of 26.0 percent is well above the 2017-18 state average of 6.8 percent. It has been reduced by 12.5 percentage points from 38.5 percent in 2016-17. Great Oaks Charter School must take measures to remedy student attendance and improve school culture and climate going forward.

Standard 4: Legal Compliance Indicators	Rating
4.1. Open Meetings/Information Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.2. Students with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.3. English Learners	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.4. Rights of Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.5. Teacher/Staff Credentials	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.6. Employee Rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM

Notes and Evidence:

- Indicator 4.1:** The school website and Governing Board documents demonstrate that Governing Board meetings are open and accessible to the public. The Governing Board meeting schedule for the year and meeting agenda are posted on the school’s website. Education records and testing data are secured in locked file cabinets in the school director’s office.
- Indicator 4.2:** A review of Great Oaks Charter School 2017-18 Public School Information System (PSIS) data reports the percentage of special education students at the school is 19.0 percent. To address student needs, Great Oaks Charter School employs six full-time special education teachers which provide instruction and individualized services to identified students. Of the six staff with special education responsibilities only one teacher is properly certified for the position held. This is in violation of state and federal special education laws which require that schools employ certified personnel to implement the special education and related services required in each student’s individualized education program (IEP).

Great Oaks Charter School provides special education supports and services within the least restrictive environment continuum as determined by the identified student IEP. Specialized instruction is provided in the general education setting with integrated instructional support and grade level resource room settings. The school reports that they are fully supportive of meaningful inclusive practices for all students with disabilities.

A sample of three IEPs reviewed showed the students were to receive special education services in math and language arts, in addition to other academic supports or related service. The service implementers were designated in the IEP as the “special education teacher, tutor instructor.” However, as indicated above, a majority of the students receive services from non-certified staff. Also, of concern is the lack of evidence provided to document that the school is monitoring student progress toward short-term IEP objectives and annual goals.

Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings are held by the School District in which the student resides. Parents/Guardians, students (as appropriate) and required PPT members from Great Oaks Charter School are invited to participate in the meeting. The PPT develops, reviews, and revises the IEP based upon the student’s individualized needs.

Student education files are kept in locked file cabinets. All files reviewed had individual sign-in access sheets. The reviewed files were well organized and maintained.

- **Indicator 4.3:** A review of Great Oaks Charter School 2017-18 Public School Information System (PSIS) data reports the percentage of students identified as English Learners (ELs) at the school is 14.0 percent. Through meeting with stakeholder groups during the site visit, it became evident that Great Oaks Charter School is committed to ensuring the success of ELs at the school, but additional emphasis should be made to ensure that this priority is reflected in school policies, professional learning and instruction.

Pursuant to Section 10-17e-j of the C.G.S., Great Oaks Charter School is required to provide a transitional bilingual program to eligible ELs. The school must prepare and send a letter to the parent/guardian of all eligible students informing them of their right to receive these services. If one or more parents request the service for their child, a bilingual program must be provided for those ELs. If no parents opt for the bilingual services, a copy of the letter must be provided to the CSDE with an e-mail/letter stating that no parents of eligible students selected the program for their child. Note that if anyone opts into a bilingual program, a posting for a certified bilingual teacher must be created and posted. If the posting does not result in the hiring of a certified bilingual teacher, as appropriate, the school must send a letter to the Commissioner of Education requesting a certified Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) teacher be used in lieu of a bilingual teacher and describing how native language support will be provided.

Great Oaks Charter School must create an EL policies and procedures document which includes information on student identification, parental communication, program options and supports, annual assessment and exiting students and is aligned to state standards. The school should accept and utilize the federal Title III funds and the state bilingual funds to which the school is entitled. The Title III funds should be used for supplemental purposes supporting English learners, and the state bilingual grant funds should be used to offset costs associated with offering native language support.

- **Indicator 4.4:** Great Oaks Charter School student rights policies and procedures include admissions, handling of student information, due process protections and state nondiscrimination laws. Interviews with parents and staff at the school supported the proper implementation and use of the policies.
- **Indicator 4.5:** Current legislation requires that at least 50 percent of educators serving in a charter school must hold a valid certificate (Initial, Provisional, or Professional Certificate). As of February 1, 2019, of the 34 staff requiring certification, only 14, or 41 percent hold a valid certificate for the positions they hold. Great Oaks Charter School is currently out of compliance with this legislation. Addressing this should be a priority.

Of the remaining 50 percent, legislation also allows for the issuance of a Charter School Educator Permit (CSEP) for no more than 30 percent of the educators serving in a charter school. Other options to bring staff into compliance for certification, pending they met criteria for each option, include a Long-Term Substitute Certificate, a Durational Shortage Area permit (DSAP), or a Resident Educator Permit.

- **Indicator 4.6:** A review of Great Oaks Charter School employment policies and procedures and an interview with the school director determined the school’s hiring and employment practices ensure protections under the Family Medical Leave Act, Americans with Disabilities Act and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Prepared by:	Reviewed by:	Approved by:
Robert Kelly, Charter School Program Manager	Lisa Lamenzo, Turnaround Office Bureau Chief	Desi Nesmith, Chief Turnaround Officer

GREAT OAKS CHARTER SCHOOL DATA

Table 1: 2017-18 Student Enrollment and Demographic Information

Grades served:	6-9
Total enrollment:	400
Percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced price meals:	86.5
Percentage of special education students:	19.0
Percentage of students with limited English proficiency:	14.0
Percentage of minority students:	96.0
Percentage American Indian or Alaska Native:	*
Percentage of Asian students:	*
Percentage of Black students:	47.0
Percentage of Hispanic students:	47.3
Percentage of Two or More Races:	*
Percentage of Caucasian students:	4.0

*N<=5. Data suppressed to ensure student data privacy.

Table 2: School Culture and Climate Data

Performance Metric:	2015-16:	2016-17:	2017-18:	STATE 2017-18:
Average daily attendance rate:	94.2%	95.0%	93.5%	
Chronic absenteeism rate:	15.1%	11.0%	18.0%	10.7%
Number of in-school suspensions:	101	130	15	
Number of out-of-school suspensions:	99	243	189	
Suspension rate (% students with 1+ suspension):	33.5%	38.5%	26.0%	6.8%
Number of expulsions:	0	0	0	
Cohort graduation rate (if applicable):	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Six Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (if applicable):	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*N<=5. Data suppressed to ensure student data privacy.

Table 3: Student Waitlist and Mobility Information

Performance Metric:	2016-17:	2017-18:	2018-19:
Waitlist number:	350	281	60
Number of enrolled students who left during the school year:	23	44	N/A
Number of students who did not re-enroll the next year and had not completed the highest grade at the school:	58	57	N/A

GREAT OAKS CHARTER SCHOOL SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT

Table 4: Smarter Balanced Assessment - Percentage of students at level 3 and 4 (met/exceeded)				
Grades 6-8	2016-17	2017-18	District-2017-18	State-2017-18
ELA	17.2	16.6	26.6	55.1
MATH	13.7	18.6	12.4	43.7

Grades 3-8 Smarter Balanced Assessment - Percentage of students at level 3 and 4 (met/exceeded)								
GRADE	ELA 2016-17	ELA 2017-18	DISTRICT 2017-18	STATE 2017-18	MATH 2016-17	MATH 2017-18	DISTRICT 2017-18	STATE 2017-18
6	23.5	13.2	26.4	54.3	19.0	24.6	13.1	43.9
7	8.6	*	27.3	55.0	8.8	18.7	12.3	44.1
8	18.6	13.5	26.2	56.1	12.7	9.5	11.8	43.0

*The data are suppressed to ensure confidentiality.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

ARESTA L. JOHNSON, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

City Hall - 45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD cont.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

JOHN R. WELDON
Chairperson



MARIA PEREIRA

DENNIS BRADLEY, ESQ.

BEN WALKER

SYBIL ALLEN

HERNAN ILLINGWORTH
Vice-Chairperson

JOSEPH SOKOLOVIC

JESSICA MARTINEZ
Secretary

CHRIS TAYLOR

"Changing Futures and Achieving Excellence Together"

November 1, 2018

Mr. Desi Nesmith
Chief Turnaround Officer
Connecticut Department of Education
P.O. Box 2219
Hartford, CT 06145

Dear Mr. Nesmith,

This letter serves as a follow-up to your letter dated October 11, 2018 regarding the potential renewal of Great Oaks Charter School. As you are aware, I remain greatly concerned regarding funding state mandates without having the necessary fiscal resources to aid us in our efforts to provide equitable educational opportunities for our children in Bridgeport Public Schools. Shown below, you will find data emphasizing many of these charter school unfunded mandates which further exacerbate our ability to function and thrive as a school district.

It would be beneficial to have the Connecticut Department of Education discuss fiscal relief and/or support of the charter school unfunded mandates. To that end, I would be unable to support renewal of a charter at this time, as our current fiscal condition continues to place us in a state of fiscal uncertainty and therefore jeopardizes our ability to educate each and every one of our students in the City of Bridgeport.

Unfunded mandates are statutes or regulations that require the school district to perform certain actions, without being given money for fulfilling the requirements.

Projected**Charter Schools**

- Sped Services: \$1,662,342
- Sped Transportation \$ 245,000
- Gen Ed Transportation \$ 1,210,089

Best Regards,

Aresta L. Johnson
Superintendent of Schools

cc: Robert Kelly, Charter School Program Manager
Felicia Canty, Charter School Office Liaison

ALJ/ao