

**V.B.**

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**TO BE PROPOSED:**

March 7, 2018

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, renews the charter of Explorations Charter School from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2021, subject to the Commissioner's March 7, 2018, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of \_\_\_\_\_, this seventh day of March, Two Thousand Eighteen.

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, Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** March 7, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Renewal of State Charter – Explorations Charter School, Winchester

**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, and 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**

Explorations Charter School (ECS) opened in the fall of 1997 and serves 96 students in Grades 9-12, 19 percent reside in Winchester (host district), 50 percent reside in Torrington (the majority sending district) and the remaining students come from 15 area towns. Table 1, page 13, of the attached Charter Renewal Report provides 2016-17 student enrollment and demographic data. 40.7 percent of ECS's students qualify for free or reduced price meals and 41.3 percent of students receive special education services. ECS's mission states, in part, "to create a public school that cultivates positive student attitudes towards life-long learning in an experiential, non-traditional educational setting". The school is small, with small class sizes and has a student teacher ratio of 15 to one. From its inception, the school seeks and attracts students who have not fit in or been successful in the traditional school setting. The profile for the average ECS student involves a history of truancy and attendance issues, behavior challenges and mental health needs.

Historically, students enter ECS under credited and below grade level achievement in literacy and numeracy. On average, according to its STAR benchmark assessments, ECS's students enter two to three grade levels behind in reading and three to four grade levels behind in math. To help address student needs, the school utilizes small class size for increased individualized attention, and employs three full-time special education teachers to serve students and their needs.

ECS was identified by the CSDE in March 2016 as a Category 5 Turnaround school. A Category 5 Turnaround school is a school that is among the lowest performing schools in Connecticut that was identified in 2014-15 and remains on the list in 2016-17. The school culture and climate data (Table 2) indicate the school has serious student attendance issues and student behavior issues. ECS average daily attendance rate of 91.5 percent in 2016-17 is below the state goal of 95.0 percent. The 2016-17 chronic absenteeism rate of 28.8 percent is almost three times the state chronic absenteeism rate of 9.6 percent.

## Charter Renewal Process

*Application for Renewal of Charter:* The CSDE accepted an application for the renewal of ECS's charter on October 20, 2017. 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. ECS 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. Overall, the team determined that the application responded effectively to the areas required and provided sufficient supporting evidence.

*Renewal Site Visit:* On November 30, 2017, the CSDE renewal team conducted an on-site visit at ECS. The purpose of the renewal on-site visit was to observe ECS'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 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 ECS from the Superintendent of Winchester Public Schools and from contiguous school districts: Barkhamsted, Colebrook, New Hartford, Norfolk Regional School District 6, and Torrington. The CSDE received a letter supporting the renewal of ECS's charter from Ms. Melony Brady-Shanley, Superintendent, Winchester Public Schools (see Attachment A).

*Public Hearing:* Joseph J. Vrabely, Jr., member of the SBE, and CSDE staff held a public hearing on October 26, 2017, in Winchester, and heard from 10 individuals on the potential charter renewal of ECS and the impact it is having on the community. Public hearing participants included members of the ECS community, including family members, students, school staff and community members. Over 20 people attended the public hearing. Ten 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 Next Generation Accountability Report 2016-17 (see attached) speak to ECS's performance and success 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 ECS's last three certified financial audits.
- School website and Governing Board documents demonstrate that the Governing Board meetings are open and accessible to the public.
- A review of ECS's state certified staff file employee roster determined all staff are properly certified.

**Areas of concern include:**

- Going forward, ECS must concentrate on moving student achievement in English Language Arts (ELA). The 2016-17 Scholastic Aptitude Test percentage of ECS students not meeting proficiency at level 1 in English Language Arts (ELA), is 38.1 percent.
- Going forward, ECS must concentrate on moving student achievement in Mathematics. The 2016-17 Scholastic Aptitude Test percentage of ECS students' not meeting proficiency level 1 and 2 in Mathematics is 85.8 percent.
- A review of ECS's accounting policies and procedures manual (APPM) by staff from CSDE's Office of Internal Audit determined the APPM lacks some of the standard sections of an APPM. The missing items include payroll, travel reimbursements, contract authorizations and daily cash receipts.
- Going forward, ECS must increase its average daily attendance rate. ECS's 2016-17 average daily attendance rate of 91.5 percent is below the state goal of 95.0 percent.
- Going forward, ECS must reduce its chronic absenteeism rate. ECS's 2016-17 chronic absenteeism rate of 28.8 percent exceeded the state average of 9.9 percent.
- Going forward, ECS must reduce its suspension rate. ECS's 2016-17 suspension rate was 17.4 percent exceeded the state average of 6.7 percent.

**Charter Renewal Recommendation**

ECS is a charter school that serves a specific need in the community by serving to re-engage students who are at high risk of dropping out and have struggled behaviorally and academically in a traditional school setting. ECS must focus on providing increased services in the development of foundational skills as evidenced by the severe deficits in student achievement. The Turnaround Office will work with ECS to develop a corrective 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 English language arts instruction.
- Incorporation of skills-based scientific, research-based instruction and interventions on decoding, fluency, and numeracy in order to increase students' achievement levels in reading and mathematics. The Turnaround Office will provide technical assistance in the development of a more extensive menu of interventions 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 Connecticut Core State Standards and the inherent level of rigor. Specific efforts need to focus on differentiation in order to support student access to content.

Based on Explorations' performance indicators and acknowledging the students served and its mission, the CSDE recommends that the SBE renew the school's charter for a period of three years, with the following conditions:

1. By April 6, 2018, ECS 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, ECS 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, 2018, and on a bi-monthly basis beginning October 2018 through June 2019. The plan shall be developed in consultation with CSDE's Turnaround Office. ECS shall implement the corrective actions within thirty days following the Commissioner's acceptance of the plan.
2. By April 6, 2018, ECS 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. The plan shall be developed in consultation with CSDE's Turnaround Office. ECS shall implement the corrective actions within thirty days following the Commissioner's acceptance of the plan.
3. By April 6, 2018, ECS shall submit a corrective action plan acceptable to the Commissioner. The corrective action plan must include measures to improve student academic achievement. The plan shall be developed in consultation with CSDE's Turnaround Office. ECS shall implement the corrective actions within thirty days following the Commissioner's acceptance of the plan.

The CSDE will notify ECS of action taken by the SBE following its meeting on March 7, 2018. The school will be advised of relevant technical assistance opportunities designed to improve its educational program. The CSDE will conduct follow-up visits to ensure that ECS is addressing the issues raised in this memorandum.

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

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

## CHARTER RENEWAL REPORT | 2018

Charter School Information:		
Charter School Name:		Explorations Charter School (ECS)
School Director:		Jill Johnson
School Board Chairperson:		Ginni Block
Location (City/Town):		Winchester
Rating Key:		
<b>Meets</b>		The school demonstrates effective policies and practices, resulting in positive outcomes.
<b>Pending Action</b>		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.
<b>Does Not Meet</b>		The school falls below performance expectations with significant concerns noted, which require immediate attention and intervention.
Standard 1: School Performance Indicators		Points/Max
Accountability Index:		260.9/500
Notes and Evidence:		
<p>The 2016-17 ECS Accountability Index score of 53.6 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. ECS's accountability score of 53.6 places its performance in the bottom quartile which does not meet Standard 1. Explorations' 2016-17 Next Generation Accountability Report is shown in detail on the next page.</p>		



## Next Generation Accountability Report: 2016-17 - DISTRICT PREVIEW

**Choose a District**  
Explorations District ▶

No:	Indicator	Index/ Rate	Target	Points Earned	Max Points	% Points Earned	State Avg Index/Rate
1a.	ELA Performance Index – All Students		75	0.0	0		67.1
1b.	ELA Performance Index – High Needs Students		75	0.0	0		55.9
1c.	Math Performance Index – All Students		75	0.0	0		62.2
1d.	Math Performance Index – High Needs Students		75	0.0	0		50.5
1e.	Science Performance Index – All Students		75	0.0	0		55.3
1f.	Science Performance Index – High Needs Students		75	0.0	0		45.2
2a.	ELA Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – All Students		100	0.0	0		55.4%
2b.	ELA Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – High Needs Students		100	0.0	0		49.8%
2c.	Math Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – All Students		100	0.0	0		61.7%
2d.	Math Avg. Percentage of Growth Target Achieved – High Needs Students		100	0.0	0		53.7%
4a.	Chronic Absenteeism – All Students	28.8%		<5%	2.5	50	5.0%
4b.	Chronic Absenteeism – High Needs Students	32.7%		<5%	0.0	50	0.0%
5	Preparation for CCR – % taking courses	39.5%		75%	26.4	50	52.7%
6	Preparation for CCR – % passing exams	16.3%		75%	10.9	50	21.7%
7	On-track to High School Graduation			94%	0.0	0	37.8%
8	4-year Graduation All Students (2016 Cohort)	74.1%		94%	78.8	100	78.8%
9	6-year Graduation - High Needs Students (2014 Cohort)	81.0%		94%	86.1	100	86.1%
10	Postsecondary Entrance (Class of 2016)			75%	0.0	0	72.0%
11	Physical Fitness (estimated part rate) and (fitness rate)	76.2%	18.8%	75%	6.3	50	12.5% <b>92.0% <small>51.6%</small></b>
12	Arts Access			60%	50.0	50	100.0% <b>50.5%</b>
	Accountability Index				260.9	500	<b>52.2%</b>

<p>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 <a href="#">Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement</a>.</p>							
<p>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.</p>							

Indicator	Target	Participation Rate	Rate
ELA – All Students			95.5%
ELA – High Needs Students			N/A
Math – All Students			95.5%
Math – High Needs Students			N/A
Science – All Students			90.9%
Science – High Needs Students			N/A

Gap Indicators	Non-High Needs Rate*	High Needs Rate	Size of Gap	State Gap Mean + 1 StdDev**	Is Gap an Outlier?	Participation Rate	Rate
Achievement Gap Size Outlier?					N		
ELA Performance Index Gap					N/A		
Math Performance Index Gap					N/A		
Science Performance Index Gap					N/A		
Six-Year Graduation Rate Gap (2014 cohort)			81.0%		12.0% N		

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 of gap exceeds the state mean gap plus one standard deviation, then the gap is an outlier.

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 type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" 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
<b>Notes and Evidence:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Indicator 2.1:</b> CSDE site visit staff reviewed ECS's last three certified financial audits and uncovered no significant findings, conditions or internal control weakness.</li> <li><b>Indicator 2.2:</b> CSDE site visit staff reviewed ECS's last three certified financial audits, Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual (APPM) and budgets, interviewed the school business manager, school director and governing board members. The reviewers determined ECS completed on-time submission of certified audits and annual budgets. Staff from CSDE's Office of Internal Audit determined the APPM lacks standard sections of an APPM. The missing items include payroll, travel reimbursements, contract authorizations and daily cash receipts. The CSDE has received and is currently reviewing ECS's corrective action plan and draft revisions to its APPM and expects it to be completed by March 2018.</li> <li><b>Indicator 2.3:</b> Staff from CSDE's Office of Internal Audit reviewed ECS's last three certified financial audits and determined ECS's debt to asset ratio (total liabilities/total assets), total margin (net income/revenue) and debt service coverage ratio (net income + depreciation + interest expense) / (principal + interest payments) 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 (22 days) is below NACSA minimum threshold of 30 days and a low current asset ratio (current assets/current liabilities) indicate that the school operates on a very tight budget. It is important that the school and its Board take a more active role in seeking and obtaining private donations to help increase school revenues going forward.</li> <li><b>Indicator 2.4:</b> A review of ECS's school policies regarding anti-nepotism and conflict of interest were found in compliance with CSDE administrative oversight guidelines. ECS'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 was supported by a review of background check and board training records and the review of the schools website and governing board meeting minutes.</li> <li><b>Indicator 2.5:</b> As evidenced by the site visit, ECS has a safe and well-maintained school facility to support quality teaching and learning. Evidence included proof of property insurance, an approved Winchester Fire Marshal inspection and approved certificate of occupancy issued by the Winchester Building Department for the facility.</li> </ul>	

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 type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" 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
<b>Notes and Evidence:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Indicator 3.1:</b> ECS currently serves 96 students, 19 percent reside in Winchester (the host district), 50 percent reside in Torrington (the majority sending district) and the remaining students come from 15 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.</li> <li><b>Indicator 3.2:</b> A review of ECS's waitlist information (Table 3 page 13) determined it maintains a positive waitlist of families beyond the available number of seats. In 2017-18, 12 students were on the waiting list. The waitlist has included students each year for the past three years. The October 2017 student enrollment (96) is four seats over the 2017-18 projected student enrollment.</li> <li><b>Indicator 3.3:</b> A review of ECS's 2016-17 Public School Information System (PSIS) data reports students from minority groups represent 18.5 percent of ECS's student population and 40.7 percent of students qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Explorations does not have any English learners (ELs) currently enrolled nor have they had any in the past. The percentage of special education students at ECS is 41.3 percent. While its special education population is almost three times the state average, to better reflect the demographics of the surrounding community, the school must seek to enroll more EL students.</li> <li><b>Indicator 3.4:</b> ECS demonstrates strong community support as evidenced by the letter (Attachment A) of support for the school from Ms. Melony M. Brady-Shanley, Superintendent of Winchester Public Schools. During the on-sites visit, CSDE staff interviewed parents of students attending the school and several students. All described the strong commination between the school and families as a key component. Parents conveyed overwhelming support for what they perceive is a school that provides a quality alternative educational experience for their children. Over 20 individuals attended the October 26, 2017, renewal public hearing, and 10 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.</li> <li><b>Indicator 3.5:</b> A review of ECS's student average daily attendance, chronic absenteeism and suspension rates (Table 2, page 13) are of concern with small signs of improvement. The average daily attendance rate of students in 2016-17 of 91.5 percent while below the state goal of 95 percent has improved from 90.2 percent in 2014-15. Student chronic absenteeism rate of 28.8 percent in 2016-17 is almost three times the state average of 9.9 percent, it has been reduced from 30.6 percent in 2015-16. The suspension rate of 17.4 percent is well above the 2016-17 state average of 6.7 percent, down from the 20.7 percent in 2015-16. ESC must take measures to remedy student attendance and address behavior management going forward. The CSDE Turnaround Office will work with the school to assist in these efforts.</li> </ul>	

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
4.6. Employee Rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
<b>Notes and Evidence:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Indicator 4.1:</b> 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.</li> <li><b>Indicator 4.2:</b> A review of ECS 2016-17 Public School Information System (PSIS) data reports the percentage of special education students at the school was 41.3 percent. Many of these students have emotional and behavioral disorders, anxiety disorders, and or have a 504 plan. To address student needs Explorations has hired a third full-time Special Education Teacher to provide more intensive instruction to the growing Special Education population, as well as, a full-time Guidance Counselor who provides lessons targeted to address identified student needs. The school also employs a social worker who provides services as identified in student Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).</li> </ul> <p>Staff have participated in Life Space Crisis Intervention (LSCI) training to support all students, particularly those with emotional and behavioral difficulties. The school has also developed and implemented behavior contracts that are signed by students and parents, and help to ensure awareness of behavioral expectations. Weekly review of discipline referrals and contact with parents are also supports in place that provide valuable feedback on the effectiveness of interventions to inform program implementation.</p> <p>Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings are joint endeavors including an Explorations administrator, district of residence administrator and other appropriate staff from Explorations and the district of residence. Dialogue regarding the development and revisions of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are common practice at Explorations and include meetings with parents. Explorations issues invitations for PPT meetings and utilizes IEP Direct (an electronic program for developing and managing IEPs) to facilitate the development of documents. When initial referrals are needed Explorations issues required paperwork to the appropriate parties. Once evaluations have been conducted by the district of residence, Explorations will reconvene the PPT to review results of evaluations and to make recommendations. Based on these recommendations, Explorations will respond as required to meet the student's needs.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>File reviews and staff interviews indicate the special education students attending the Charter school are receiving specialized instruction and related services as set forth in their IEPs. As evident in the review of student files, the school monitors student progress toward short-term IEP objectives and annual goals.</p>	

- **Indicator 4.3:** Classroom observations and staff interviews by the CSDE English Learner consultant during the site visit determined that the school does not currently have any identified English learners nor has it in the past. A review of ECS's English learner (EL) policies and procedures determined amendments were required to fully align to federal and state guidelines. ECS has drafted and submitted to the CSDE amendments of its EL policies and procedures, which are currently under review and is expected to be completed by March 2018.
- **Indicator 4.4:** ECS 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:** Staff from the CSDE Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification reviewed the state certified staff file and the school's employee roster and found its staff to be in compliance teacher certification.
- **Indicator 4.6:** A review of ECS 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:	Approved by:
Robert Kelly, Charter School Program Manager	Desi D. Nesmith, Chief Turnaround Officer

## EXPLORATIONS CHARTER SCHOOL DATA

<b>Table 1: 2016 17 Student Enrollment and Demographic Information</b>	
Grades served:	9-12
Total enrollment:	92
Percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced price meals:	40.7%
Percentage of special education students:	41.3%
Percentage of students with limited English proficiency:	0%
Percentage of minority students:	18.5%
Percentage American Indian or Alaska Native:	*
Percentage of Asian students:	*
Percentage of Black students:	*
Percentage of Hispanic students:	14.1%
Percentage of Two or More Races:	*
Percentage of Caucasian students:	81.5%

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

<b>Table 2: School Culture and Climate Data</b>				
Performance Metric:	2014-15:	2015-16:	2016-17:	STATE
Average daily attendance rate:	90.2%	90.9%	91.5%	
Chronic absenteeism rate:	28.4%	30.6%	28.8%	9.9%
Number of in-school suspensions:	11	12	10	
Number of out-of-school suspensions:	7	16	10	
Suspension rate (% students with 1+ suspension):	15.3%	20.7%	17.4%	6.7%
Number of expulsions:	0	0	0	
Cohort graduation rate (if applicable):	*	74.1%	N/A	87.4%
Six Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (if applicable):	N/A	N/A	N/A	82.0%

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

<b>Table 3: Student Waitlist and Mobility Information</b>				
Performance Metric:	2015-16:	2016-17:	2017-18:	
Waitlist number:	6	4	12	
Number of enrolled students who left during the school year:	15	12	17	
Number of students who did not re-enroll the next year and had not completed the highest grade at the school:	3	7	3	

## EXPLORATIONS CHARTER SCHOOL SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST DATA

**Table 4: SAT Performance**

SAT		ELA 2016 17			Math 2016 17		
Metric		Exploration	Torrington	State	Exploration	Torrington	State
Percentage of students at level 3 and 4 (met/exceeded)	*	54.9	65.0	*	23.80	39.3	

\*Data suppressed to ensure student data privacy.

### 2016-17

**Table 5: 2016 17 Reading Performance**

Star 360							
Grade	Total Sample	Fall 2016 # Students at Proficiency	Total Sample	Winter 2017 # Students at Proficiency	Total Sample	Spring 2017 # Students at Proficiency	Fall – Spring Growth
9	18	6 (33.3%)	17	7 (41.2%)	15	7 (46.7%)	13.4%
10	31	10 (32.3%)	26	12 (46.2%)	23	11 (47.8%)	15.5%
11	27	12 (44.4%)	25	11 (44%)	24	13 (54.2%)	9.8%
12	22	10 (45.5%)	20	12 (60%)	20	14 (70%)	24.5%

**Table 6: 2016 17 Math Performance**

Star 360							
Grade	Total Sample	Fall 2016 # Students at Proficiency	Total Sample	Winter 2017 # Students at Proficiency	Total Sample	Spring 2017 # Students at Proficiency	Fall - Spring Growth
9	18	7 (38.9%)	17	9 (52.3%)	15	10 (66.7%)	27.8%
10	31	10 (32.3%)	26	10 (38.5%)	23	11 (47.8%)	15.5%
11	27	12 (44.4%)	25	14 (56%)	24	15 (62.5%)	18.1%
12	22	13 (59.1%)	20	14 (70%)	20	15 (75%)	15.9%

## 2017-18

**Table 7: 2017 18 Reading Performance**

Star 360							
Grade	Total Sample	Fall 2017 # Students at Proficiency	Total Sample	Winter 2018 # Students at Proficiency	Total Sample	Spring 2018 # Students at Proficiency	Fall – Spring Growth
9	19	3 (15.8%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	21	8 (38%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
11	30	14 (50%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
12	26	11 (42.3%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Table 8: 2017 18 Math Performance**

Star 360							
Grade	Total Sample	Fall 2016 # Students at Proficiency	Total Sample	Winter 2017 # Students at Proficiency	Total Sample	Spring 2017 # Students at Proficiency	Fall – Spring Growth
9	19	2 (10.5%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	21	7 (33.3%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
11	30	14 (46.7%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
12	25	13 (52%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**\*Note, winter testing will occur February 6-15 and Spring Testing will occur May 8-17.**



# WINCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

338 MAIN STREET, P.O. BOX 338 • WINSTED, CT 06098

TELEPHONE: 860-379-0706; FAX: 860-738-0638

MELONY BRADY-SHANLEY - SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

**RECEIVED**

August 31, 2017

**SEP 5 - 2017**

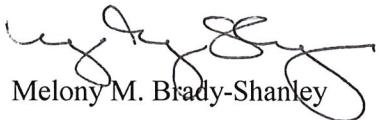
Chief Turnaround Office  
CT State Dept. of Education

Dear Mr. Nesmith,

On behalf of the Winchester Public Schools, we wish to extend our support of the Explorations Charter School in Winsted, CT. Explorations has proven to be a willing and able co-partner in the education of the children of Winchester. Currently, our two organizations are routinely communicating, engaging on various educational projects, and working collaboratively to support the specific needs of selected students.

We look forward to a long and fruitful relationship with Explorations Charter School. If you should have any further questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,



Melony M. Brady-Shanley