

**Connecticut State Department of Education**  
**Biennial Report on the Operation of**  
**Charter Schools in Connecticut**  
**2022**

## Table of Contents

---

Introduction/Background Information .....	1
Charter School Landscape .....	2
Charter Schools   Districts Served .....	3
Charter Renewal .....	4-5
School Profile Compilations   Funding   Charter School Facilities .....	6
Demographic Information .....	7
Recommendations and Updates   Conclusion .....	8

## **Introduction/Background Information**

Since Connecticut's charter school law was first enacted 1996, charter schools have been one part of Connecticut's approach to closing the achievement gap. Charter schools are a tuition-free public-school model available to Connecticut students, in addition to magnet schools, vocational-agricultural schools, career-oriented technical high schools, endowed academies and traditional public schools.

Charter schools are authorized and funded by the state. The term "charter school" refers to the state-issued governing document, or charter, that grants a non-profit board of directors the conditional authority to operate the school. Student enrollment is determined via lottery conducted at each school or district. Students who are not selected are placed on the school's waitlist.

In exchange for greater autonomy, charter schools are subject to heightened accountability. All charter schools operate on a strictly provisional basis, subject to continuous review and renewal by the State Board of Education (SBE) every five years or less. The State Board receives reports from the Charter Renewal Team that provides an account of each school's School Performance; Stewardship, Governance, and Management; Student Population and Legal Compliance in addition to other factors that determine the length of a school's charter renewal.

**Statutory Reporting Requirement:** Section 10-66gg of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) requires the Commissioner of Education to review and report biennially, within available appropriations, on the operation of charter schools established pursuant to Sections 10-66aa to 10-66ff, inclusive, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education. Such reporting must provide: (1) recommendations for any statutory changes that would facilitate expansion in the number of charter schools; (2) a compilation of school profiles pursuant to Section 10-66cc; (3) an assessment of the adequacy of funding pursuant to Section 10-66ee; and (4) the adequacy and availability of suitable charter school facilities for such schools.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) issued a Request for Proposals on December 27, 2016. Danbury Prospect Charter School and Norwalk Charter School for Excellence received initial certificates of approval for state charter schools from the SBE on October 3, 2018. Presently the Legislature has not appropriated funding to open the two schools.

The CSDE issued a Request for Proposals for the development of state and local charter schools on March 15, 2022. Prospective applicants must submit a completed application packet on or before December 1, 2022. The CSDE will be hosting a Bidders' Conference on April 20, 2022, to provide an opportunity for applicants to ask questions, learn more about the charter school application requirements, and the application process.

**Enabling Legislation:** C.G.S., Sections 10-66aa to 10-66ff.

## Charter School Landscape

A total of 10 school districts host 21 charter schools serving approximately 10,930 students. As of October 2020, the CSDE's latest audited student enrollment data, 84 school districts (about 52 percent of all school districts) are represented in Connecticut's charter schools. Page three provides a table of charter schools, their host district, and school districts served.

One charter school has closed since the last Biennial Report on the Operation of Charter Schools in Connecticut was published in January of 2020. Stamford Academy, located in Stamford, enrolled 147 students in grades 9-12 during the 2019-20 academic year. Due to lack of financial viability, Stamford Academy notified the SBE and the CSDE that it would discontinue operation and voluntarily surrendered its charter at the conclusion of the 2019-2020 academic year, accepted by the SBE on January 6, 2021.

**The State Charter School Grant:** The state charter school per pupil amount for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 fiscal years was \$11,250.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
*FY 2019-20	\$119,328,750
*FY 2020-21	\$118,417,500
*Estimated	

**Use of Funds:** Charter schools can use state charter school grant funds for any costs associated with the operation of a school, including the acquisition and maintenance of suitable facilities.

**The Local Charter School Grant:** The CSDE may award, subject to funding availability, initial start-up grants of up to \$500,000 and grants of up to \$3,000 per student. There is currently one local charter school, Elm City Montessori School in New Haven.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Per Pupil Grant</u>
*FY 2019-20	\$600,000
*FY 2020-21	\$690,000
*Estimated	

## Charter Schools

Charter School	Host District	Districts Served
Achievement First Bridgeport Academy	Bridgeport	Bridgeport
Achievement First Hartford Academy	Hartford	Hartford
Amistad Academy	New Haven	Hamden, New Haven
Booker T. Washington	New Haven	Ansonia, Branford, Derby, East Haven, Enfield, Hamden, Hartford, New Haven, Oxford, Waterbury, West Haven
Brass City Charter School	Waterbury	Danbury, Waterbury
Capital Preparatory Harbor School	Bridgeport	Ansonia, Bridgeport, Derby, Fairfield, Hamden, Meriden, Middletown, Milford, Naugatuck, New Haven, Norwalk, Seymour, Shelton, Stratford, Torrington, Trumbull, New Britain, Waterbury, West Haven
Common Ground High School	New Haven	Ansonia, Branford, Bridgeport, Cheshire, Clinton, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, Meriden, Milford, New Haven, North Branford, North Haven, Shelton, Stratford, Trumbull, Waterbury, West Haven, Woodbridge
Elm City College Preparatory School	New Haven	New Haven
Elm City Montessori (local charter)	New Haven	East Haven, Hamden, Milford, New Haven, North Haven, Orange, Wallingford, West Haven
Explorations Charter School	Winsted	Barkhamsted, Burlington, Canton, Farmington, Hartland, Harwinton, Litchfield, New Hartford, Plymouth, Simsbury, Torrington, Waterbury, Winchester, Windsor
Great Oaks	Bridgeport	Ansonia, Bridgeport, Bridgewater, Naugatuck, Stratford
Highville Charter School	New Haven	Ansonia, Branford, Bridgeport, Derby, East Haven, Hamden, Meriden, New Haven, North Haven, Southbury, Wallingford, Waterbury, West Haven
Integrated Day Charter School	Norwich	Bozrah, Columbia, East Lyme, Franklin, Griswold, Groton, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Marlborough, Montville, North Stonington, Plainfield, Preston, Norwich, Sprague
Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC)	New London	Berlin, Colchester, Essex, Groton, Hartford, Ledyard, Montville, New London, Norwich, Preston, Salem, Stonington, Waterford
Jumoke Academy Charter School	Hartford	Bloomfield, East Hartford, East Windsor, Enfield, Hartford, Manchester, New Britain, Rocky Hill, Simsbury, South Windsor, Torrington, Vernon, Waterbury, West Hartford, Windsor, Windsor Locks
New Beginnings Family Academy	Bridgeport	Ansonia, Bridgeport, Derby, New Haven, Shelton, Stamford, Stratford, Waterbury
Odyssey Charter School	Manchester	Bristol, Cheshire, East Hartford, East Windsor, Enfield, Hartford, Hebron, Manchester, Middletown, Newington, Tolland, Vernon, Windham, Windsor, Windsor Locks
Park City Prep Charter School	Bridgeport	Bridgeport, Hamden, Naugatuck, Stratford, Waterbury
Side by Side Charter School	Norwalk	Bridgeport, Norwalk, Seymour, Stamford, Stratford
Stamford Charter School for Excellence	Stamford	Stamford
The Bridge Academy	Bridgeport	Ansonia, Bridgeport, Shelton, Stratford

Source: Public School Information System (PSIS) October 2020

## Charter Renewal

The charter school performance framework drives the CSDE's charter school accountability system and charter renewal determinations. Charters may be renewed by the SBE for up to five years. In accordance with C.G.S., Section 10-66bb(g), the CSDE and the SBE evaluate charter school performance and operations based on evidence of four performance standards outlined below.

- 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 CSDE and the SBE evaluate qualitative evidence and longitudinal data when making charter renewal recommendations. The renewal process begins with an eligible charter school's submission of a charter renewal application to the CSDE. A successful application provides clear and compelling evidence for renewal of the charter, focused primarily on student outcomes. The application must offer a vision for the school's future and identify and offer solutions for any weaknesses or gaps in the current program.

A review team comprised of the CSDE staff with expertise in curriculum and instruction, student assessment, teacher certification, school administration, school finance, English learners (EL), and special education review the renewal application. The review team conducts a site visit at the school. The site visit is designed to collect data to confirm and supplement the review of the schools' renewal application. The review team conducts interviews and focus groups with diverse school stakeholders, including school leaders, governing board members, teachers, and family members of students.

Additionally, the CSDE solicits comments on the charter renewal from the superintendent of the school district where the charter school is located and superintendents of contiguous districts. A public hearing on the charter renewal is held in the school district in which the school is located. Evidence collected through the site visit observations, interviews and focus groups, superintendent letters and public testimony inform a renewal report prepared by the CSDE and submitted to the Commissioner and the SBE.

The SBE uses findings from the renewal process to determine the length of the renewal and any necessary conditions and/or reporting requirements. In accordance with state law, a charter may be renewed for a maximum of five years. To be eligible for a five-year renewal, the charter school must meet all performance indicators outlined in the charter school performance framework. Conversely, a school’s charter will not be renewed if the school does not apply for renewal or if the school fails to meet critical charter performance standards. In the case of non-renewal, the charter school will be closed upon the charter’s expiration.

On July 14, 2020, the SBE, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, extended by one-year the term of each of the eligible charter schools currently in operation and under the jurisdiction of the SBE. The rationale for this action was to ensure that charter schools were able to devote all the time and resources necessary to adequately address issues imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and maintain a comprehensive charter renewal process.

In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, 12 charters were renewed by the SBE.

School Name	Renewal Date	Renewal Period
*Achievement First Bridgeport Academy, Bridgeport	February 6, 2020	2 years
*Amistad Academy, New Haven	February 6, 2020	2 years
*Booker T. Washington Academy, New Haven	June 3, 2020	3 years
*Capital Prep Harbor, Bridgeport	June 3, 2020	3 years
*Common Ground High School, New Haven	March 4, 2020	3 years
*Elm City College Prep, New Haven	February 6, 2020	2 years
*Highville Charter School, New Haven	June 3, 2020	3 years
*Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication, ISAAC New London	June 3, 2020	3 years
*Jumoke Academy, Hartford	June 3, 2020	3 years
Odyssey Community School, Manchester	March 4, 2020	2 years
Stamford Charter School for Excellence, Stamford	February 6, 2020	5 years
*The Bridge Academy, Bridgeport	March 4, 2020	2 years

\*Schools eligible to receive SBE approved one-year extension, per July 14, 2020, SBE decision.

Currently, six charter schools are up for renewal in the 2021-2022 fiscal year: Explorations Charter School (Winsted), Great Oaks Charter School (Bridgeport), Integrated Day Charter School (Norwich), New Beginnings Family Academy (Bridgeport), Side By Side Charter School (Norwalk), and The Bridge Academy (Bridgeport).

## **School Profile Compilations**

Section 10-66gg of the C.G.S. requires Strategic School Profiles be identified in Biennial Reports on the Operation of Charter Schools in Connecticut. *EdSIGHT-INSIGHT INTO EDUCATION* is an interactive data portal that supports data, statistics, reports about schools, districts, and the state. This portal can be accessed by using the following link: <https://edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do>

## **Funding**

Pursuant to Section 10-66ee(d), for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, and each fiscal year thereafter, a grant of \$11,250 per student is issued to state charter schools.

Pursuant to changes in the law for the 2021 legislative session, effective July 1, 2021, state charter schools received a per-pupil base grant of \$11,525 for each student enrolled in the school per approved enrollment and additional support provided depending on student eligibility for free or reduced-priced meals and students identified as English learners.

Such payments shall be made as follows: twenty-five per cent of the amount not later than July fifteenth; September first based on estimated student enrollment on May first; twenty-five per cent of the amount no later than January first; and the remaining amount no later than April first, each based on student enrollment on October first.

Legislation also provides, within available appropriations, a per-student grant to local charter schools of \$3,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, and each fiscal year thereafter.

## **Charter School Facilities**

Legislation authorizes grants to state charter schools to assist them in financing building projects, general improvements to school buildings and repayment of debt incurred for school building projects. To fund the program, section 10-66jj of the C.G.S. states that the State Bond Commission has the authority to approve the issuance of state bonds not to exceed 45 million dollars. Since the grant went into effect in July 2005, the CSDE has issued seven requests for proposals (RFPs) resulting in \$37.7 million dollars in competitively awarded grants to state charter schools. In November 2018, the CSDE issued an RFP with a January 2019 due date. The CSDE received applications from 10 schools totaling \$6.8 million in requests. Applications from six schools were approved by the CSDE, totaling \$3.8 million. The CSDE awaits the Bond Commission's approval to release the funds. The CSDE plans to issue an RFP for the remaining balance of \$3.5 million after the Bond Commission acts on the current proposal before it.



## Demographic Information

The following table represents charter school estimated October 2021 enrollment information:

### Charter Grantees 2021-2022

State Charter School	Estimated Enrollment	2021-2022 Estimated Grant Payment
Achievement First Bridgeport Academy	1,094	\$12,736,348
Achievement First Hartford Academy	1,125	\$13,114,125
Amistad Academy	1,098	\$12,789,504
Booker T. Washington Academy	540	\$6,295,320
Brass City Charter School	360	\$4,178,160
Capital Preparatory Harbor School	778	\$9,045,028
Common Ground High School	225	\$2,616,525
Elm City College Preparatory School	765	\$8,911,485
*Elm City Montessori School	284	\$852,000
Explorations Charter School	92	\$1,070,880
Great Oaks Charter School	661	\$7,698,006
Highville Charter School	447	\$5,194,587
Integrated Day Charter School	352	\$4,080,384
Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC)	276	\$3,217,608
Jumoke Academy Charter School	686	\$7,928,788
New Beginnings Family Academy	499	\$5,815,845
Odyssey Community School	328	\$3,802,504
Park City Prep Charter School	360	\$4,196,160
Side By Side Charter School	236	\$2,742,792
Stamford Charter School for Excellence	504	\$5,860,512
The Bridge Academy	280	\$3,262,840
<b>Total State Charter</b>	<b>10,990</b>	<b>\$125,409,401</b>
<b>*Total Local Charter</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>\$852,000</b>

Source: Based on projected enrollment, provided by the schools and reviewed by the CSDE.

## **Statutory Update**

Effective July 1, 2015, legislation requires that the CSDE review and recommend approval of charter school material change requests if the request is to increase the total student enrollment capacity by twenty per cent or more. The legislation requires the charter school to submit the request to the CSDE no later than April first of the fiscal year two years prior to the fiscal year in which such material change would take effect. In determining whether to recommend approval of such request, the CSDE shall consider (1) the financial feasibility of such increased enrollment, (2) such charter school's performance, stewardship, governance and management, student population and legal compliance, and (3) any other factors the CSDE deems relevant to such request. Upon a recommendation by the CSDE to approve the request, the SBE shall vote on such request not later than sixty-days after the date of receipt of such request or as part of the charter renewal process of the charter school.

## **Conclusion**

Charter school oversight is grounded in school quality, accountability, and transparency. To provide greater public transparency, the CSDE continues to work to improve Governance and Operations and strengthen and clarify charter schools' responsibility to produce clear expectations for student performance and equity.

The CSDE will work to maintain focused oversight, school quality, accountability, and transparency to ensure schools are operating in accordance, but not limited to, the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Sections 10-66aa-10-66uu.