

VII.A.

Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

To Be Proposed:
February 14, 2024

Resolved, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, renews the charter of Booker T. Washington Academy from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2027, subject to the conditions and recommendations set forth in the Commissioner's February 14, 2024, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____, this fourteenth day of February, Two Thousand Twenty-Four.

Signed: _____
Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Secretary
State Board of Education

**Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford**

To: State Board of Education
From: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education
Date: February 14, 2024
Subject: Renewal of State Charter: Booker T. Washington Academy, New Haven

Executive Summary

Introduction

In accordance with Section (§)10-66bb(g) 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, data submissions, 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

Booker T. Washington Academy (BTWA) opened in the fall of 2014. BTWA has the maximum approved student enrollment of 500 seats. The latest CSDE audited student enrollment data from 2022-23 reports 444 students in Grades K-8 with 84 percent residing in New Haven (the host district) and 16 percent residing in six area towns. Of those students, 82.2 percent qualify for free or reduced-price meals and 7.4 percent receive special education services. Table 1 on page 17 of the attached Charter Renewal Report provides the latest available audited 2022-23 student enrollment and demographic data. The mission of BTWA is to “provide a safe, nurturing, and challenging learning environment with the aim of producing responsible and productive citizens prepared to compete successfully in the global marketplace. To achieve this aim, we are committed to ensuring that each of our scholars has the capacity to read, write, think, discuss and problem solve, and to transfer these skills to achieve their college and career objectives.”

On June 3, 2020, BTWA received a three-year charter renewal with a condition. More specifically, the condition required BTWA to develop a corrective action plan to improve student achievement. Subsequently, due to implications of the pandemic, the SBE approved a further one-year extension on July 14, 2020. Consequently, the school’s charter will expire June 30, 2024.

On September 6, 2023, pursuant to C.G.S. §10-66ss of the Connecticut General Statutes, the SBE approved the charter amendment proposal of BTWA to contract for whole school management services with Elevate Charter Schools, a charter management organization.

On October 4, 2023, pursuant to C.G.S §10-66tt of the Connecticut General Statutes, the SBE approved the contract for whole school management services between Booker T. Washington Academy, Inc. and Elevate Charter Schools, Inc.

Charter Renewal Process

Application for Renewal of Charter: The CSDE accepted an application for the renewal of BTWA’s charter on September 8, 2023. 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. BTWA submitted data and evidence to substantiate the charter school’s written responses.

A renewal team comprised of the CSDE staff with expertise in curriculum, assessments, special education, English Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELs/MLs), school management, finance, and school governance reviewed the renewal application and requested clarification and additional information where necessary.

Renewal Site Visit: On October 3, 2023, the CSDE renewal team conducted an onsite visit at BTWA. The purpose of the onsite visit was to observe BTWA programs, policies, practices, and procedures to assess their efficacy and fidelity to the school’s charter and aligned operating systems. Evidence was collected through onsite visit observations, document reviews, interviews, and focus groups. The team spoke with board members, administrators, staff, students, 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 BTWA from the Superintendent of New Haven Public Schools (BPS) and from contiguous school districts: East Haven, Hamden, North Haven, Orange, West Haven and Woodbridge. The CSDE received a letter from Vonda J. Tencza, Superintendent, Woodbridge School District (see Attachment A), which provided no reason or comment that reflects poorly on the school. The CSDE received no letters against the renewal of the school's charter.

Public Hearing: Ms. Erin Benham, Vice Chairperson of the SBE, and the CSDE staff held a public hearing on November 29, 2023, in the City of New Haven, and heard from individuals on the potential charter renewal of BTWA and the impact it is having on the community. Public hearing participants included members of the BTWA community, including a member of the governing board, family members, students, graduates, school staff, and community members. Over 100 people attended the public hearing. Twenty-eight 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.

Review of Documents and Site Visit Findings

The most recent available data and information contained in the Charter Renewal Report and the state student data (beginning on page 8) indicates BTWA's performance according to the four performance standards. The report highlights the school's strengths and areas for continued growth.

Areas of Strengths Include:

- BTWA's English language arts (ELA) Performance Index – All Students in 2018-19 exceeded the host district by 8.8 index points and was within 1.1 index points of the state and experienced an increase of 1.4 index points, from an index of 56.8 in 2021-22 to an index of 58.2 in 2022-23.
- BTWA's ELA Performance Index – High Needs Students have exceeded the host district and the state over the three reporting periods (2018-19, 2021-22 and 2022-23).
- BTWA's Mathematics Performance Index – All Students in 2018-19 exceeded the host district by 13.5 index points and was 1.0 index point above the state and experienced an increase of 1.1 index points, from an index of 50.4 in 2021-22 to an index of 51.5 in 2022-23.
- BTWA's Mathematics Performance Index – High Needs Students have exceeded the host district and the state over the three reporting periods (2018-19, 2021-22 and 2022-23).
- BTWA's ELA Academic Growth – All Students have trended up over the three reporting periods (42.3 percent in 2018-19, 52.2 percent in 2021-22, and 59.4 percent in 2022-23) exceeding the host district and state in 2022-23.
- BTWA's ELA Academic Growth – High Needs Students have trended up over the three reporting periods (42.9 percent in 2018-19, 50.9 percent in 2021-22, and 62.4 percent in 2022-23) exceeding the host district and state in 2022-23.
- BTWA's Mathematics Academic Growth – All Students have increased 23.0 percentage points from 41.7 percent in 2018-19 to 64.7 percent in 2021-22 exceeding the host district and within 0.5 percentage points of the state average. In 2022-23 it decreased 5.7 percentage points to 59.0 in 2022-23 remaining above the host district and within 2.8 percentage points of the state average of 61.8 percent.

- BTWA’s Mathematics Academic Growth – High Needs Students have trended up over the two reporting periods (40.8 percent in 2018-19 and 62.3 percent in 2021-22) exceeding the host district and state in 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- BTWA’s suspension rates of 2.6 percent in 2019-20, increased 6.6 percentage points during the midst of the pandemic to 9.2 percent in 2021-22, decreased 1.5 percentage points in 2022-23 to 7.7 percent, equal to the host district and within 0.7 percentage points of the state average of 7.0 percent.
- BTWA demonstrates strong community support as evidenced by over 100 people attended the public hearing. Twenty-eight 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. Parents and students interviewed during the site visit were also supportive of the school and its efforts to serve children and families.
- BTWA is in compliance with the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program and Educator Evaluation and Support Plan (EESP).
- BTWA’s website and governing board documents demonstrate that the governing board meetings are open and accessible to the public.
- No significant findings, conditions, or internal weaknesses were uncovered in BTWA’s three most recent certified financial audits.
- A review of the school’s finances found it to be financially viable.

Areas for Continued Growth Include:

- While BTWA’s 2022-23 Accountability Index score of 59.8 percent outperformed the host district score of 57.6 percent by 2.2 percentage points, it is 9.5 percentage points below the state average of 69.3 percent and has performed below the state and host district in 2018-19 and 2021-22.
- BTWA’s ELA Performance Index – All Students have decreased 8.4 index points from an index of 66.6 in 2018-19 to an index of 58.2 in 2022-23 and has performed below the state in 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- While BTWA’s ELA Performance Index – High Needs Students have exceeded the host district and the state over the three reporting periods, BTWA’s ELA Performance Index – High Needs Students have decreased 7.9 index points from an index of 64.7 in 2018-19 to an index of 56.8 in 2022-23.
- BTWA’s 2022-23 Mathematics Performance Index – All Students have decreased 12.6 index points from an index of 64.1 in 2018-19 to and index of 51.5 in 2022-23 and has performed below the state in 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- While BTWA’s Mathematics Performance Index – High Needs Students have exceeded the host district and the state over the three reporting periods, BTWA’s Mathematics Performance Index – High Needs Students have decreased 11.5 index points from an index of 62.4 in 2018-19 to an index of 50.9 in 2022-23.
- A review of BTWA’s chronic absenteeism rates of 17.3 percent in 2019-20 showed they were 3.8 percentage points below the host district and 5.1 percentage points above the state. In 2021-22, during the midst of the pandemic, the school’s chronic absenteeism rate experienced an increase of 10.9 percentage points to 28.2 percent, 29.9 percentage points below the host district of 58.1 percent and 4.5 percentage points above the state average of 23.7 percent. In 2022-23 the school achieved a 1.9 percentage point decrease to 26.3 percent, 10.3 percentage points below the host district average of 36.6 percent and 6.3 percentage points above the state average of 20.0 percent. It is important for the school to continue to refine and develop systems and resources to identify and address barriers that negatively affect student attendance.

- BTWA's 2022-23 Discipline Tier, Based on Suspension/Expulsion Data was Tier 2, equal to the host district and below the state. A Tier 2 designates a school with Consistently Medium Disproportionality: Not in Tiers 4 or 3 AND either Black or African American or Hispanic/Latino Relative Risk Index (RRI) ≥ 2 in 2 recent years. It is important that the school continues to develop its restorative approach to minimize student behavioral incidents resulting in suspensions and review its discipline policies and processes to ensure that they increase alternatives to exclusionary discipline.
- The BTWA Governing Board and its Finance and Audit Committee have specific roles and responsibilities for oversight of school operations, including financial management, management team and CMO. However, the roles and responsibilities are not formally documented in a Board Policies and Procedures Manual (BPPM) to ensure consistency and continuity. The Board Chair has indicated that the governing board is committed to engaging with legal counsel to develop and implement a written BPPM.
- The reviewers determined that the school must implement policies and procedures for establishing and maintaining assets on the school's inventory that were purchased with federal funds. The Board Chair has indicated that the Governing Board is committed to the development and implementation of policies and procedures that will ensure the school's compliance with the Federal Uniform Guidance (2 CFR subsection 200.313), which outlines specific inventory requirements for asset purchases made from federal grant funds.
- A review of BTWA's state certified staff file on January 12, 2024, and employee roster determined 8 staff are not properly certified.

Conclusion

Booker T. Washington Academy is providing its students, families, and community with a viable public school choice option, achieving its mission, and making strides in closing Connecticut's achievement gap. A review of the school's suspension rates over three reporting periods show it below the host district and the state in 2018-19, increasing during the midst of the pandemic to a rate above the host district and the state in 2021-22, reduced by 1.5 percentage points in 2022-23 to 7.7 percent, equal to the host district and 0.7 percentage points above the state average of 7.0 percent. BTWA's Tier 2 Discipline designation in 2022-23 is representative of a school with consistent medium disproportionality in suspensions among its Black or African American students in two recent years. It's important that the work that the school has been doing to improve student behavior continues with an emphasis on reviewing its student discipline policies and procedures to ensure that they increase alternatives to exclusionary discipline. The school's chronic absenteeism revealed it has been below the host district for the last three years reported 2019-20, 2021-22 and 2022-23 and near but above the state averages. To meet student needs, school administration and staff have developed systems and support to identify and assist students and families with attendance issues. It is important that the school continues to refine and develop systems and resources to identify and address barriers that negatively affect student attendance. BTWA's Academic Growth ELA – All Students and High Needs Students have trended up over the three reporting periods (2018-19, 2021-22, and 2022-23) exceeding the host district and the state in 2022-23. The school's Academic Growth Mathematics – High Needs Students have trended up or near level over the three reporting periods (2018-19, 2021-22 and 2022-23) and exceeded the

host district and state in 2021-22 and 2022-23. While Academic Growth Mathematics – All Students growth increased 23.0 percentage points from 41.7 in 2018-19 to 64.7 in 2021-22, it decreased 5.7 percentage points in 2022-23 to 59.0 remaining above the host district and within 2.8 percentage points of the state average. While BTWA’s ELA and Mathematics Performance Index – High Needs Students have exceeded the host district and the state over the three reporting periods (2018-19, 2021-22, and 2022-23), ELA decreased 7.9 index points from an index of 64.7 in 2018-19 to an index of 56.8 in 2022-23, Mathematics decreased 11.5 index points from an index of 62.4 in 2018-19 to an index of 50.9 in 2022-23. While BTWA’s ELA and Mathematics Performance Index – All Students in 2018-19 were near to or above the state averages, each have experienced decreases between 2018-19 and 2022-23 of 8.4 index points in ELA and 12.6 index points in Mathematics. The school is out of compliance with teacher certification.

Charter Renewal Recommendation

Acknowledging that BTWA’s academic performance indicators needs improvement and BTWA is also out of compliance with teacher certification, the CSDE recommends that the SBE renew the school’s charter for a period of three years, subject to the following conditions:

1. By March 18, 2024, BTWA shall submit a revised corrective action plan acceptable to the Commissioner of Education. BTWA shall engage in a root cause analysis utilizing the CSDE [Needs Assessment Toolkit \(ct.gov\)](https://www.ct.gov/csde/lib/csde/needs-assessment-toolkit). The corrective action plan must include revisions to the identified strategies and action steps in the 2020 corrective action plan to improve student academic achievement. Additionally, BTWA must utilize the CSDE Acceleration Cycle as a framework for developing and implementing an improvement plan to address learning acceleration, learning recovery, and student enrichment because of the pandemic. The school must convene a team to develop and monitor the implementation of the revised plan that intentionally addresses unfinished learning while focusing on the teaching of prioritized, essential content, and maintaining a high level of rigor for all learners. BTWA shall submit to the CSDE, on a bi-monthly basis beginning October 2024, a report monitoring its year-to-date progress of improving student academic achievement. The plan shall be developed in consultation with the CSDE Turnaround Office. BTWA shall implement the corrective actions within thirty days following the Commissioner of Education’s acceptance of the plan.
2. By March 18, 2024, BTWA shall submit a corrective action plan for the CSDE review and approval to bring its staff into certification compliance by October 31, 2024, 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, and action steps, including responsible school staff, on August 1, 2024, to ensure compliance. The plan shall be developed in consultation with the CSDE Talent Office. BTWA shall implement the corrective actions within thirty days following the Commissioner of Education’s acceptance of the plan.

In October of 2024, BTWA administrative staff will meet with the Accountability and Support Committee of the SBE and provide a status update of its corrective action plan to address student achievement and teacher certification. At that time the Accountability and Support Committee members and department staff will analyze the performance data and teacher certification data to determine if the prioritized strategies in the corrective action plans are making a positive impact on student outcomes, teacher practice and all staff providing instruction are properly certified. Dependent on the status of the issues discussed, BTWA administrative staff may be called back to meet with the Accountability and Support Committee to provide a second update in the spring of 2025 and bring forth an analysis of performance data and other metrics specific to each corrective action plan.

Recognizing that BTWA must adequately address student achievement and teacher certification through corrective actions, pursuant to Section 10-66bb(h) of the C.G.S., the Commissioner of Education may, at any time, place a charter school on probation if the school has failed to adequately demonstrate student progress or comply with applicable laws and regulations.

The CSDE will notify BTWA of action taken by the SBE following its meeting on February 14, 2024. 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 BTWA is addressing the issues raised in this memorandum.

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

Reviewed by: Irene E. Parisi, M.Ed.
Chief Academic Officer

Approved by: Charles E. Hewes, Ed.D.
Deputy Commissioner for Academics & Innovation

CHARTER RENEWAL REPORT | 2022

Charter School Information		
Charter School Name:	Booker T. Washington Academy	
School Director/ Principal:	Ms. Charlene Antoine and Mr. Adam Rosenberg	
School Board Chairperson:	Kelcy Steele	
Location (City/Town):	New Haven	
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 school 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:	538.5/900	59.8
Notes and Evidence:		
<p>Booker T. Washington Academy (BTWA) 2022-23 Accountability Index of 59.8 percent is 9.5 percentage points below the state’s Accountability Index of 69.3 percent. Schools that meet Standard 1: are schools earning an accountability index score from 85 to 100 (Category 1), schools earning an accountability index score from 70 to 84.9 percent (Category 2), and schools earning an accountability index score of 69.9 percent or lower and have not been identified as a Turnaround or Focus School (Category 3). BTWA’s Accountability Index score of 59.8 percent places its performance in Category 3, which earns a does not meet for Standard 1. BTWA’s 2022-23 Next Generation Accountability Report is shown in detail on the next page.</p>		

Next Generation Accountability, 2022-23 – Booker T. Washington Academy (Grades: K-8)

School Category: 3

Indicator	Index/Rate	Target	Points Earned	Max Points	% Points Earned	State % Points Earned
1a. ELA Performance Index - All Students	58.2	75	38.8	50	77.6	85.2
1b. ELA Performance Index - High Needs Students	56.8	75	37.9	50	75.8	72.1
1c. Math Performance Index - All Students	51.5	75	34.3	50	68.6	79.6
1d. Math Performance Index - High Needs Students	50.9	75	33.9	50	67.8	65.2
1e. Science Performance Index - All Students	53.0	75	35.3	50	70.6	82.1
1f. Science Performance Index - High Needs Students	51.1	75	34.1	50	68.1	68.2
2a. ELA Academic Growth - All Students	59.4%	100%	59.4	100	59.4	57.2
2b. ELA Academic Growth - High Needs Students	62.4%	100%	62.4	100	62.4	52.5
2c. Math Academic Growth - All Students	59.0%	100%	59.0	100	59.0	61.8
2d. Math Academic Growth - High Needs Students	62.0%	100%	62.0	100	62.0	55.5
2e. Progress Toward English Proficiency - Literacy	.	100%	.	.	.	55.3
2f. Progress Toward English Proficiency - Oral	.	100%	.	.	.	56.1
4a. Chronic Absenteeism - All Students	26.3%	<=5%	7.4	50	14.7	39.8
4b. Chronic Absenteeism - High Needs Students	27.1%	<=5%	5.9	50	11.7	6.0
5. Preparation for CCR - Percent Taking Courses	.	75%	.	.	.	100.0
6. Preparation for CCR - Percent Passing Exams	.	75%	.	.	.	59.0
7. On-track to High School Graduation	68.0%	94%	36.2	50	72.3	87.7
8. 4-year Graduation: All Students (2022 Cohort)	.	94%	.	.	.	94.6
9. 6-year Graduation: High Needs Students (2020 Cohort)	.	94%	.	.	.	91.1
10. Postsecondary Entrance (Graduating Class 2022)	.	75%	.	.	.	88.2
11. Physical Fitness (estimated participation rate = 100.0%)	47.9%	75%	31.9	50	63.8	60.6
12. Arts Access	.	60%	.	.	.	90.9
Accountability Index	.	.	538.5	900	59.8	69.3

Gap Indicators

Indicator	Non-High Needs Rate	High Needs Rate	Size of Gap	State Gap Mean +1 Standard Deviation	Is Gap an Outlier?
ELA Performance Index Gap	65.0	56.8	8.1	17.0	N
Math Performance Index Gap	54.6	50.9	3.7	18.6	N
Science Performance Index Gap	.	51.1	.	18.6	
Graduation Rate Gap (2020 Cohort)	

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

Assessment Participation Rates

Indicator	Participation Rate (%)
ELA - All Students	99.6
ELA - High Needs Students	100.0
Math - All Students	99.3
Math - High Needs Students	99.6
Science - All Students	98.6
Science - High Needs Students	100.0

Minimum participation standard is 95%.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input 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"> Indicator 2.1: The CSDE site visit staff reviewed BTWA’s last three certified financial audits and uncovered no significant findings, conditions, or internal control weakness. Indicator 2.2: The CSDE site visit staff reviewed BTWA’s last three certified financial audits, Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual (APPM), Board Policies and Procedures, budgets, and interviewed the school’s staff, interim executive director, principals, director of operations, and governing board members. Staff from the CSDE’s Office of Internal Audit determined the APPM contained the standard sections of an APPM. However, it was determined that the governing board was not reviewing the APPM annually to ensure it reflects any changes to policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities. The Board Chair has indicated that the annual review of the school’s APPM will be incorporated into the governing board’s annual schedule to ensure that it remains current and effective. The BTWA governing board and its Finance and Audit Committee have specific roles and responsibilities for oversight of school operations, including financial management, management team and CMO. However, the roles and responsibilities are not formally documented in a Board Policies and Procedures Manual (BPPM) to ensure consistency and continuity. The Board Chair has indicated that the governing board is committed to engaging with legal counsel to develop and implement a written BPPM. The revision will formally document the roles and responsibilities of the BTWA governing board and its Finance and Audit Committee for the oversight of school operations and CMO. The reviewers determined that the school must implement policies and procedures for establishing and maintaining assets on the school’s inventory that were purchased with federal funds. The Board Chair has indicated that the governing board is committed to the development and implementation of policies and procedures that will ensure the school’s compliance with the Federal Uniform Guidance (2 CFR subsection 200.313), which outlines specific inventory requirements for asset purchases made from federal grant funds. The reviewers determined BTWA completed on-time submission of certified audits and annual budgets. Indicator 2.3: Staff from the CSDE’s Office of Internal Audit reviewed BTWA’s latest certified financial audit and determined its debt-to-asset ratio (total liabilities total assets), total margin (net income/total revenue), current asset ratio (current assets/current liabilities) and days of unrestricted cash (unrestricted cash/((total expenditures – depreciation)/365)) meets or exceeds the ranges recommended by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), signifying overall financial health. 	

- **Indicator 2.4:** A review of BTWA's school policies regarding conflict of interest and nepotism were found to comply with the CSDE administrative oversight guidelines. BTWA's policies and procedures regarding background checks of staff and board members, open board meetings, board membership, and membership training were reviewed and found to comply with state and federal laws, rules, and regulations. This finding is supported by a review of school policies and procedures, background checks, board training records, and the school's website including board meeting minutes. A review of BTWA's bylaws found them to comply with state and federal laws, rules, and regulations.
- **Indicator 2.5:** As evidenced during the site visit, BTWA has safe and well-maintained school facilities to support teaching and learning. The facilities have been approved by the appropriate Fire Marshal and Building Departments. The school has proof of property insurance.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> DNM
Notes and Evidence:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 3.1: The latest CSDE audited student enrollment data from 2022-23 reports 444 students in Grades K-8 with 84 percent residing in New Haven (the host district) and 16 percent residing in 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 BTWA’s waiting list information (Table 5, page 18) determined that the school maintains a waiting list of families beyond the available number of seats. In 2023-24, 20 students were on the waiting list. The waiting list has included more than 44 students in 2021-22 and 14 students in 2022-23. Indicator 3.3: A review of BTWA’s latest CSDE audited Public School Information System (PSIS) data from 2022-23 reported 82.2 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. The percentage of special education students is 7.4 percent. BTWA’s English Learner/Multilingual Learner (EL/ML) population is 4.1 percent. Indicator 3.4: BTWA demonstrates strong community support, as evidenced by parent interviews conducted by the CSDE renewal team on the day of the site visit. The parent focus group described various communication methods between the school and families, including texts, phone calls, emails, and written communication including translations in second languages, when necessary. Currently, parents report receiving regular updates from the school that detail student academics and behavior. Parents expressed support for what they perceive is a good educational model that prepares their children for high school and beyond. Parents indicated they were satisfied with the school’s commitment to serving students with diverse needs while providing a safe and nurturing environment. Students and graduates who testified during the public hearing on November 29, 2023, and student interviews conducted by the CSDE renewal team on the day of the site visit reported they were generally happy with the school and choice opportunity that the school provides. Over 100 people attended the public hearing. Twenty-eight 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. Indicator 3.5: BTWA’s suspension rates of 2.6 percent in 2019-20, 9.2 percent in 2021-22, and 7.7 percent in 2022-23 show an increase exceeding the host district and state averages during the midst of the pandemic in 2021-22, followed by a reduction of 1.5 percentage points in 2022-23 to 7.7 percent equal to the host district and within 0.7 percentage points of the state average of 7.0 percent. 	

A review of BTWA's chronic absenteeism rates of 17.3 percent in 2019-20 showed they were 3.8 percentage points below the host district and 5.1 percentage points above the state. In 2021-22, during the midst of the pandemic, the school's chronic absenteeism rate experienced an increase of 10.9 percentage points to 28.2 percent, 29.9 percentage points below the host district of 58.1 percent and 4.5 percentage points above the state average of 23.7 percent. In 2022-23 the school achieved a 1.9 percentage point reduction to 26.3 percent, 10.3 percentage points below the host district average of 36.6 percent and 6.3 percentage points above the state average of 20.0 percent. It is important for the school to continue to refine and develop systems and resources to identify and address barriers that negatively affect student attendance.

BTWA's 2022-23 Discipline Tier Based on Suspension/Expulsion Data was Tier 2, equal to the host district and below the state. A Tier 2 designates a school with Consistently Medium Disproportionality: Not in Tiers 4 or 3 AND Black or African American students Relative Risk Index (RRI) ≥ 2 in 2 recent years. It is important that the school continues to develop its restorative approach to minimize student behavioral incidents resulting in suspensions and review its discipline policies and processes to ensure that they treat all students fairly.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input 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, TEAM and EESP	<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:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 4.1: The school’s website and governing board documents demonstrated that the governing board meetings are open and accessible to the public. The governing board’s meeting schedule for the year and meeting agendas are posted on the school’s website. Education records and testing data are kept in locked file cabinets in a secure room. Indicator 4.2: A review of BTWA’s latest audited 2022-23 Public School Information System (PSIS) data reported the percentage of special education students at the school is 7.4 percent. At the time of the site visit there were 31 students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) attending BTWA. The majority of the 31 students reside in New Haven. The remaining students reside in four additional sending school districts. To meet the needs of identified students, the school employs two social workers, two paraeducators and two special education teachers. School based counseling and social work services are provided in accordance with the students’ IEPs. Related services including speech and language services, occupational therapy, and physical therapy are contracted through the sending districts. School social work services are contracted for New Haven resident students and BTWA directly employs school social workers that serve both general education students and special education students from the other sending districts. Related service providers sign in and out at the main office. Classroom teachers monitor and notify the main office if a student is not removed from class for their scheduled related service. Service logs were not being kept. The school staff and administration have agreed to maintain service logs going forward. <p>Specialized instruction is provided by the special education teachers and staff. Students receive specialized instruction in a combination of push in classroom support and pull-out resource support. During the site visit, a student with push in classroom support in their IEP was observed working on modified materials during Writing with the support of an academic assistant. Students also receive support through tiered intervention. School based teams meet to review student progress and set new goals. The use of data to plan and deliver accommodations, small group instruction, flexible grouping, and scaffolding of information were all mentioned. The elementary and middle school have SRBI specialists and coaches to support students and teachers. Students receive tiered intervention support for behavior as they do for academics.</p> <p>The IEPs were neatly organized, kept in locking file cabinets, and contained completed sign out sheets. BTWA utilizes the CT-SEDS system. All special education staff have access to CT-SEDS and special education teachers and related service providers input information directly into the system. IEPs are provided to the general education teachers. Teachers also have access to the special education files. General education teachers are provided IEP updates throughout the school year. The special education teachers support the general education teachers in understanding their responsibilities within the IEPs.</p>	

Staff from BTWA and the sending district attend PPT meetings. At least one general education teacher from BTWA attend the PPT meetings and provide a report on student progress as well as the special education teacher and principal. The majority of PPT meetings are held virtually. A special education administrator from the sending district attend the PPT meetings as the PPT chair. The related service providers from the sending districts also attend the PPT meetings.

The school is aware of their Child Find responsibilities. Using observations and data, students needing additional academic and behavioral support are identified to receive intervention services through a multi-tiered system of support. The school has a Student Intervention Team (SIT) that meets regularly, and parents are provided updates on student progress and continued needs. If a student requires additional support after receiving tier 3 intervention, a special education referral is made to the sending district. Through communication with parents, the previous school and LEA, and a review of records, the staff at BTWA work to immediately determine if a newly enrolled student has an active IEP.

- **Indicator 4.3:** A review of BTWA's latest audited 2022-23 PSIS data reports indicated that the percentage of students identified as English learner/multilingual learner (EL/ML) at the school is 4.1 percent. Through an analysis of the renewal materials and meeting with stakeholder groups, it became evident that BTWA is committed to ensuring the success of MLs/ELs at the school. The school has taken actions that affirm this commitment to MLs/ELs by employing a long-term substitute that is providing the ML/EL students with support and who is currently working toward becoming a certified teacher, and by attempting to hire a certified TESOL and/or bilingual teacher. Additionally, the school is committed to providing training to teachers to enable them to integrate ML/EL support in the core curriculum. The school has applied for the Title III grant funds for which it is eligible, as it has done in preceding years. The school is not mandated to provide a bilingual program in the 2023-24 school year. The school was required to revise its Identification/Continuation of Services Letter and its Home Language Survey which it completed.
- **Indicator 4.4:** BTWA 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:** A review of BTWA's staff file of January 12, 2024, reported 79.5 percent of staff in compliance with certification. It is the responsibility of the school to take steps to ensure that 100 percent of the staff holds appropriate certificates, permits, or authorizations for their positions. Of the 39 staff members requiring certification, 31 staff members or 79.5 percent hold a valid certificate or other temporary certificates, permits, or authorizations. The remaining 8 staff members, or 20.5 percent have no active certification/permit on file or are serving in an assignment that does not match a valid endorsement.

BTWA is in compliance with the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program and Educator Evaluation and Support Plan (EESP).

- **Indicator 4.6:** A review of legal actions brought against BTWA determined that no government agency alleged the violation of any law by the school or undertaken any investigation of any violation of law by the school.

Prepared by:	Reviewed by:
Robert E. Kelly Charter School Program Manager	Irene E. Parisi Chief Academic Officer

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON ACADEMY DATA TABLES

Table 1: 2022-23 Student Enrollment and Demographic Information	
Grades served:	K-8
Total enrollment:	444
Percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals:	82.2
Percentage of students with disabilities:	7.4
Percentage of students identified as English Learners:	4.1
Percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native students:	*
Percentage of Asian students:	N/A
Percentage of Black or African American students:	81.8
Percentage of Hispanic or Latino students:	15.3
Percentage of Two or More Races:	1.8
Percentage of White students:	*

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

Table 2: School Performance: All Students									
	2018-19			2021-22			2022-23		
Indicator	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State
Accountability Index	61.8	64.7	74.2	56.0	60.9	69.7	59.8	57.6	69.3
ELA-All Students									
Performance Index (Target 75)	66.6	57.8	67.7	56.8	51.3	64.2	58.2	50.8	63.9
Academic Growth Average Percentage of Target Achieved (Target 100%)	42.3	55.2	59.9	52.2	58.7	60.4	59.4	52.1	57.2
Math-All Students									
Performance Index (Target 75)	64.1	50.6	63.1	50.4	42.0	58.6	51.5	43.0	59.7
Academic Growth Average Percentage of Target Achieved (Target 100%)	41.7	53.6	62.5	64.7	59.7	65.2	59.0	52.9	61.8

In 2019-20, Connecticut received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to be exempt from administering state academic assessments and holding schools and districts accountable using the Next Generation Accountability System.

In 2020-21, Connecticut secured a waiver from the USDOE to be exempted from implementing the Next Generation Accountability System for schools and districts; and while districts made their best effort to assess as many students as possible, there was not a requirement to test at least 95 percent of students as in past years. Additionally, school learning models changed throughout the school year and students were remote to varying degrees due to factors beyond educator control. Also, some students tested remotely, which was a new construct. As such, 2020-21 testing data is not being used as part of this analysis.

Table 3: School Performance-High Needs Students									
	2018-19			2021-22			2022-23		
Indicator	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State
ELA-High Needs Students									
Performance Index (Target 75)	64.7	54.9	58.1	54.7	48.2	54.2	56.8	47.8	54.1
Academic Growth Average Percentage of Target Achieved (Target 100%)	42.9	53.6	55.1	50.9	57.1	56.2	62.4	50.6	52.5
Math-High Needs Students									
Performance Index (Target 75)	62.4	47.8	52.7	48.8	39.0	47.7	50.9	40.0	48.9
Academic Growth Average Percentage of Target Achieved (Target 100%)	40.8	52.4	55.2	62.3	58.8	59.1	62.0	51.7	55.5

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Table 4: School Culture and Climate									
	2019-2020 ¹			2021-2022			2022-2023		
Indicator	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State	School	Host District	State
Chronic Absenteeism Rate (%)	17.3	21.1	12.2	28.2	58.1	23.7	26.3	36.6	20.0
Suspension Rate (%)	2.6	4.6	4.9	9.2	6.1	6.5	7.7	7.7	7.0
Discipline Tier	1	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	3

Table 5: BTWA Student Wait List and Mobility Information			
Performance Metric:	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Waiting number:	45	15	20
Number of enrolled students who left during the school year:	5	30	26
Number of students who did not re-enroll the next year and had not completed the highest grade at the school:	15	45	23

¹ In the 2019-20 school year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person classes were cancelled in mid-March; all districts switched to fully remote instruction for the remainder of the school year.



WOODBIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

40 Beecher Road – South
Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525

Vonda J. Tencza – Superintendent

vtencza@woodbridgeps.org

November 15, 2023

Mr. Robert Kelly
Charter School Program Manager
Connecticut State Department of Education
P.O. Box 2219
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Mr. Kelly:

I am responding to the request soliciting comments on the charter application of the Booker T. Washington Academy. I know of no reason nor can I provide any comments, which reflect poorly on the Booker T. Washington Academy. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Vonda J. Tencza
Superintendent



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